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Introduction

By James Jennings

The Black community in the United States is undergoing major demographic changes that point to greater ethnic diversity. There are many ethnic groups that compose the Black community today, including people from Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and other parts of the world. This community can no longer be approached as socially or demographically monolithic. Individuals in these groups may define themselves as "Black" but not necessarily, "African American." This issue of the *Trotter Review* explores facets of on-going ethnic transformation within the Black community. It begins with several essays that introduce broad themes related to this social and demographic development, and then presents selections by authors who discuss specific issues and questions.

In the first essay, Milton Vickerman examines how the issue of race is approached among West Indian immigrant groups. He illustrates that in certain stages of settlement and residential accommodation, West Indians may differ from African Americans in their understanding and response to racism.

Portia James provides an overview of an important national exhibit featured at the Anacostia Museum. This exhibit was devoted to the different ethnic groups that are beginning to comprise the U.S. Black community. Although the exhibit focuses on Washington, D.C. it certainly has applicability and implications for many major cities across the nation.

The next two articles, by Gemima M. Remy and Jean E. Barker, also examine similarities and differences in how Blacks in the U.S. and ethnic groups within this community view issues related to race. While Remy focuses on the Haitian community, Barker looks at Cape Verdeans. Both essays provide important historical information about the immigration of Haitians and Cape Verdeans to the United States.

The essay by J A George Irish focuses on the role of the church in mediating and accommodating immigrant groups in the Black community. He shows that the church continues to be a significant political and social institution that may serve as a bridge between new immigrant groups in the Black community and African Americans.

The next four essays discuss various aspects of African immigration in the U.S. Black community. This section begins with an article by Chris Nteta describing the role that Blacks in the U.S. played in the liberation of South Africa. Indeed, this is one of the most powerful examples of the social and political impacts that can result from collaboration between African Americans, African immigrants in the U.S., and the people of Africa. He suggests that a nation like South Africa, furthermore, now has an obligation to assist Blacks in the U.S. with on-going struggles against racism and poverty.

The essays by Kwaku Danso, Paul E. Udofia, and Mfon Ufot collectively provide some information and data about African immigration patterns and characteristics. Danso focuses on conditions that lead to African migration and describes the major explanations for this movement. He suggests several important queries facing African immigrants as a result of this migration. Udofia responds indirectly to the queries raised by Danso by examining political relations between Blacks in the U.S. and the African immigrant community. He argues that this issue will be molded significantly by the increasing number of second generation offspring of African immigrants. The issues raised by Danso and Udofia will depend, to some extent, on the nature and quality of leadership emerging from African immigrant communities. Ufot gives several examples of the kind of leadership that has characterized a few efforts, as well as some of the challenges that have to be overcome in order to make leadership effective.

The last essay by Sandra M. Grayson utilizes a Black literary and historical work to remind the reader of linkages in the culture of Africans and African Americans. She shows, by referencing Arna Bontemps's novel, *Black Thunder*, that slaves in the United States were heavily influenced by cultural practices and traditions of Africa. This is an important point to make in discussions examining relationships between Blacks in the U.S. and African immigrants today.

James Jennings is director of The Trotter Institute and professor of political science at UMass Boston. He is the author of a number of books, including *Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in Urban America* and *Race, Politics, and Economic Development: Community Perspectives.*

West Indian Immigrant Adaptation: The Role of Cross-Pressures

By Milton Vickerman

Introduction

By now, the polarized reactions of blacks and whites to the O.J. Simpson verdict have become fixed in the minds of all Americans. According to conventional wisdom the verdict revealed the existence of serious racial schisms and has led to much soul-searching over how relations between various racial/ethnic groups could have deteriorated so drastically. But reactions in the wake of the O.J. Simpson verdict have often been disingenuous inasmuch as they have implied an ignorance of the fact that, in the words of Cornell West, in America, "race matters." In reality, anyone taking a clear-eyed view of American society would have seen that race is enormously important in this country. Given the conflicts that have surrounded it, an excellent case could be made for the argument that it should be less important. Indeed, it is hard to see that anything positive would have been lost if people stopped thinking racially; if the country attained the vaunted "color blind" ideal. However, to be realistic about the situation, we need to distinguish between the "ought" and the "is." "Color blindness" is a noble ideal but, at present, it is far from feasible. In present-day American society race *is* important and will likely remain so for some time to come.

The purpose of this essay is to discuss ideas of race and achievement as they emanate from West Indian immigrants.[1] I argue that these immigrants, part of the post-1965 upsurge in non-white immigrants, are helping to cement the significance of race in American life but making the racial picture more complex at the same time. This is occurring because their numbers are growing, their economic performance questions the traditional link that has been made between race and achievement, and their experiences in this country validate the complaints emanating from African-Americans about racial discrimination. In short, West Indians embody the contradictions that are often found among black immigrants and upwardly-mobile blacks in post-Civil Rights America;[2] the reason being that they are operating under cross-pressures stemming from the conflict between their unique history/socialization/demographic reality and the existence of opposite realities in the United States. These cross-pressures cause West Indians to exhibit a marked ambivalence to life in America and to African Americans. Throughout the paper, I will illustrate these points with data taken from first-hand interviews with West Indians in the New York City area.[3]

The Impact of Immigration

A major reason why race will continue to be important in American society is that immigration and differential fertility rates among various racial/ethnic groups are causing the American population to become ever more heterogenous. Following 1965 reforms in immigration laws, the immigrant stream shifted radically away from Europe towards Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The data tell the story: Prior to 1965, upwards of 70 percent of all immigrants originated in Europe, but between 1980 and 1991 only 9 percent of immigrants fell into this category. Instead, we find in that decade, that 35 percent of all immigrants originated in Asia, and Mexico, alone, accounted for 27 percent of all immigrants. If Central and South American sources are included, the Latin component in that decade rises to 39 percent. Similarly, immigration from the Caribbean has registered impressive gains. Where these immigrants accounted for only 4 percent of all immigrants between 1951 and 1959, between 1970 and 1979 they accounted for 15 percent.[4] Indeed, West Indian countries such as Jamaica and Guyana have astoundingly high immigration rates—higher, in fact, than almost all other countries. These data are important because they point to the fact that the American population is being diversified. The Census Bureau has estimated, for instance, that over the next 60 years, the white population might decline by as much as 12 percent, while the black, Asian, and Hispanic populations might grow by 3, 8, and 13 percent, respectively.[5]

The growth of these populations is strengthening and challenging traditional American views of race, thereby creating new tensions in the society. Traditionally, Americans have viewed "race relations" as revolving around "blacks" and "whites."[6] They have regarded these categories as fixed by biology but, in reality, have constructed them socially. This means that Americans have chosen to imbue obvious physical features and the ambiguities associated with human ancestry with particular meaning.[7] The well-known "one-drop rule" is the best example of this in American history since it has posited that any individual with any known African ancestry, regardless of their appearance, is to be deemed "black."[8] Similarly, though the category "white" is often taken as a given, historical research has shown that some populations now accepted as such—e.g., Eastern Europeans—were, in the past, suspected of conforming to the "white" ideal only fitfully. To be certain, physically, they were Caucasian but their different culture and poverty in an age emphasizing racial "fitness" caused native-born Americans to suspect whether they were really "white."[9] Thus, while obvious physical differences exist between various human populations, the intrinsic meaning of these features is often in doubt and has to be interpreted within particular social contexts.

In addition to challenging received ideas about race, immigration is also creating new tensions in American society. An excellent example of this is to be found in Wausau, Wisconsin, where Hmong refugees in a formerly homogenous white city have come to play the role normally associated in the public mind with inner-city blacks. Although they did not register in the 1980 census, by 1990 the Hmong constituted 89 percent of Wausau's Asian population. This rapid population growth, fueled by a tradition of having large families, the overall youthfulness of the Hmong population, and their need for expanded educational facilities and welfare has led to the development of a white backlash.[10] Although differing in detail, similar conflicts between groups that are relatively new to the American scene can be found among blacks and Koreans in various cities, Hispanics and Hasidic Jews in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York, and West Indians and Hasidics in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The likelihood is that as immigration increasingly brings different groups into contact with each other, more of these conflicting situations will arise.

Cross-Pressures: Definitions and Preconditions in the West Indies

West Indians figure prominently among the current surge of non-white immigrants migrating to the United States; and this is but the latest (though largest) phase of three successive waves of migration that have taken West Indians to this country since around the turn of the century. However, regardless of their time of arrival, West Indian immigrants have faced certain common problems. The most important of these is that they have had to operate under severe cross-pressures which have significantly shaped their adaptation to American society. The concept of cross-pressures refers to situations in which individuals find themselves being pulled in opposite directions by opposing forces. So defined, we find cross-pressures occurring in a wide variety of settings. In the political arena, for example, cross-pressures have been found to cause voters to procrastinate, to exhibit unstable voting behavior, and to withdraw from the political process altogether.[11] With respect to religion, individuals subject to cross-pressures have been found to exhibit discrepancies between their stated religious preference and actual participation in religious organizations espousing doctrines consistent with these preferences.[12] And cross-pressures can prove to be a divisive element in ethnic groups seeking to present a united front in political and economic struggles with other groups.[13]

West Indian immigrants in this country experience cross-pressures for three primary reasons. First, most West Indian countries measure race on a sliding scale instead of very strictly as Americans are wont to do. Where, for instance, Americans have posited a dichotomous racial scheme consisting of "blacks" and "whites," and have defined "blackness" very strictly, West Indians have always recognized the presence of at least three hierarchical strata: a white elite, the black masses at the bottom of these societies, and an intermediate "brown" or colored segment stemming from sexual relations between blacks and whites. Traditionally these segments, though theoretically caste-like, have overlapped with each other such that lighter-skinned and wealthy members of the middle segment have gained acceptance as "white." Moreover, to some extent, the idea that "money whitens" has applied. This has meant that as darker-skinned individuals have gained greater amounts of wealth and education they have come to be seen as "white."[14] The situation has been made even more complex by economic and political developments this century which have somewhat delinked the traditional relationship between skin color/shade and wealth and social status. In many West Indian societies, race is not merely a question of ancestry and appearance (which is often difficult to decipher because of widespread miscegenation), but also of wealth, education, and occupation. Taking all of these factors into account, in deciding an individual's race renders the concept more complex than is the case in the United States. The social construction of race has been even more evident in the West Indies than it has been in this country.[15]

In many West Indian societies, race is not merely a question of ancestry and appearance...but also of wealth, education, and occupation.

A second important factor present in West Indian societies which leads those immigrants to experience cross-pressures in this country is that West Indians, most of whom by American standards are "black," occupy a majority status in their home societies. By this I mean that, demographically speaking, they far outnumber any other group. For instance, in Jamaica, blacks have constituted at least 74 percent of the population for the past 150 years; and this is a conservative estimate since: (a) their majority status became evident very shortly after the British conquered the island from Spain in 1655 and (b) many individuals who in Jamaican society label themselves "colored" would in this country be regarded as "black." Thus, the black population of the island could be over 90 percent; conversely, whites constitute less than one percent of the island's population.[16] A second important aspect of majority status is that blacks control the political apparatus of many West Indian societies. Thus, their prime ministers of government and civil servants all tend to be black.

These facts have the very important consequence of allowing West Indians to sidestep the issue of race in their daily lives. Since they are a majority of the population, they usually do not have to think about race. Moreover, being members of a majority group causes West Indians to delink race from achievement since, on a daily basis, they encounter a wide range of role models, from social failures to supreme court justices, all belonging to the

same race. To West Indians, race has little to do with achievement. Instead, they usually place intense stress on merit, especially as demonstrated through the attainment of educational qualifications. But, for them, "education" goes beyond mere book learning and into such implications as having respect for law and order, being well-behaved, and speaking and dressing well.[17]

A third key factor leading to the experience of cross-pressures among West Indian immigrants is that many West Indian societies possess deeply-entrenched ideologies inveighing against race thinking. Again, Jamaica is instructive in this regard. Its national motto—"Out of Many, One People"—literally means that though widespread miscegenation has taken place historically, and though a wide variety of races and ethnicities are to be found living on the island, these differences are not particularly important. Instead, all groups form one united people, Jamaicans. Several commentators have convincingly argued that such race-denying ideologies exist because the light-skinned elites who continue to dominate island economies need to distract the poor (often black) from this reality.[18]

Thus, to say that West Indians define race liberally and that they can avoid it in their daily lives is not to say that it is unimportant. Potentially, race is a very explosive factor in these societies because of the aforementioned correlation, and the anti-race ideologies serve the purpose of suppressing its public expression. This works very well since in Jamaica, for instance, race rarely becomes a public issue and individuals making overt racial appeals quickly find themselves silenced by being branded "racists." This is a very serious charge in societies that pride themselves on the non-importance of race in the attainment of upward mobility. As I noted previously, West Indians tend to emphasize merit and regard public expression of racial ideas as seriously misguided, at best, and quite dangerous, at worst. The key point to bear in mind is that many West Indians strongly embrace their societies' anti-race ideologies and, consequently, habitually think in non-racial terms.

Specific Cross-Pressures Affecting West Indian Immigrants

As mentioned in my discussion of immigration, American society differs rather dramatically from West Indian societies with respect to the three points outlined above. Americans tend to: 1) define race very strictly; 2) hold rather negative stereotypes of blacks who clearly form a minority group (politically and demographically); and, 3) practice obvious racialism, despite the existence of ideologies downplaying race. It is the meeting of these opposites that produces four specific cross-pressures among West Indian immigrants:

1. possibilities for economic achievement/the focus on merit vs. racist stereotypes limiting blacks;
2. conservative social attitudes in West Indians vs. public attitudes equating blacks with a variety of social problems;
3. West Indians' tendency to ignore race and measure it liberally vs. Americans' tendency to overemphasize and define it strictly; and,
4. West Indians' tendency to resist assimilation into the African-American population and desire to institute their more liberal view of race vs. the society's tendency to lump all individuals of African ancestry together.

Although not a comprehensive listing, these four points show the main cross-pressures faced by West Indian immigrants. In explaining how these work out on an everyday basis, it is convenient to treat them together. To begin with, we find that West Indians, migrating from economically underdeveloped islands, place economic achievement at the top of their list of priorities; and, comparing their homelands with the United States, view the latter as possessing great scope for bringing about upward mobility. Among other things, this means that West Indians tend to be highly motivated.[19] One measure of this is the stereotype (often true) that several members of West Indian families will simultaneously work at many jobs. Census data reflect these facts in that they show West Indians to have the highest labor force participation rate of all groups. For instance, the overall U.S. labor force participation rate in 1990 was 65.3 but Jamaicans registered a figure of 77.4, Trinidadians, 77.2, and the Guyanese, 74.2. In contrast, the figure for whites was 65.5 and for African Americans, 62.7. As a result of facts such as these, West Indians display several socioeconomic indicators that hover around the national median. For example, the Census Bureau reports that where the median family income, in 1990, for all American families was $35,225, that for the Guyanese was $36,278 and Jamaicans, $34,018.

West Indians' focus on economic issues is accompanied by conservative social attitudes deriving from their socialization—recall our discussion of the emphasis on and meaning of "education." Among other things, this means that, at best, they express lukewarm support for affirmative action[20] and hostility towards welfare. Note, for instance, the opinions on the latter of one Jamaican whom I interviewed:

> [Black Americans] believe that America owes them something from slavery...for America to pay them off for what happened...We [West Indians] all come here as slaves but we were taught to work for a living. We have nothing named welfare in Jamaica. If you don't work, you don't eat...Welfare is for the handicapped. Welfare is for a child...Welfare is to assist you until you can come off your legs...But nobody sit down, haughty and strong and accepting money: I don't believe in that...A lot of that is going on.

The relatively harsh tone taken towards African Americans in this excerpt is the factor that has fixated

many observers for decades. Commentators, going all the way back to the 1920s (e.g., Reid 1939)[21] have recorded this intra-ethnic conflict and, today, we still find great interest in this aspect of West Indian/African-American relations. One reason for this is that West Indians, being mainly black but somewhat successful, seem to give the lie to the notion that race poses a significant obstacle for the success of blacks in American society. The idea is that if they can achieve success, so too can African Americans. And, unfortunately, it is true that many West Indians tend to distance themselves from African Americans, holding some of the same damaging stereotypes one finds in the larger society.

There is no doubt that possessing values stressing hard work and self-sacrifice will, if applied by any group, yield certain benefits but like many other issues affecting West Indians this is only one side of the story. We need to examine the other forces pulling at these immigrants. As much as some West Indians would distance themselves from some African Americans, they find that Americans do not hesitate to lump all blacks together, applying to them singularly negative stereotypes. Indeed, the stereotypes held by some West Indians towards some African Americans stem from their realization that Americans tend to discriminate against individuals with black skin, regardless of whether they are native or foreign-born. The West Indian reaction is an attempt to differentiate themselves; to say that since they uphold values of achievement and conformity to social norms, they should receive better treatment than African Americans.

It often takes West Indians several years of residence in this country to understand that though Americans may understand, intellectually, that differences exist between West Indians and African Americans, in many instances this makes no difference in how West Indians are treated. I do not wish to be categorical here since some evidence exists to support West Indians' contention that employers prefer them over African Americans.[22] However, like African Americans, West Indians also experience employment discrimination, physical violence, threats, and avoidance behaviors (especially in public) stemming from race. Overall, they must contend with the same negative stereotypes of blacks which daily challenge African Americans. Consider the following example taken from my interviews with West Indians in New York City. An engineer described his difficulties obtaining promotion in his company:

> For promotion, I had a hard time. I remember once...I was assistant to this guy for a while and he was promoted and I thought, well, I'm going to succeed this guy; just fit into his slot. But I was there, still acting. Then this...Irish guy said: "You know...the chief is looking around for someone from outside." I said: "What!: Because, you know, in Jamaica we were taught that you go up by merit...So I thought that since I was there they wouldn't look for somebody [from] outside. It was a shock to me...I was doing the work but I would be in charge of all whites...They didn't want me to do that.

Or take this example of racial threats as experienced by a middle-aged accountant:

> I go to the track one day a year—the Belmont stakes...There are...benches around the place that you can sit on; not reserved, not paid for...And we sat and these people stated to tell us that these seats were reserved. So we said, "Look, these seats are not reserved..." And this redneck guy looked around and told us that...he used to...kill black people!

Perceptions such as this result from West Indians' gradual realization that much of American life revolves around race and that severely negative stereotypes attach to "blackness," in particular. The problem, from the West Indian point of view, is that their society trains them to ignore race, to define it broadly (recall the distinction between "blacks" and "coloreds") and to detach notions of race from achievement. In a sense, they feel that America betrays their (and its) higher ideals by pandering to baser racial sentiments. While they do not abandon these ideals, over time West Indians cannot help but be influenced by American society's pervasive racialism. Their racial experiences push them towards African Americans as much as their history and conservative socialization push them away. The result of these push and pull forces is an ambivalence towards life in America and towards African Americans. With respect to the former, West Indians express the sentiment that living in America is economically advantageous but socially stressful. Resenting the society's attempt to impose limiting notions of "blackness" on them, they react by resisting assimilation.

With respect to African Americans, long-term residents begin to counter anti-African-American stereotypes that are most frequently heard among newly-arrived West Indian immigrants. After the actual experience of discrimination, West Indians begin to better understand the African-American point of view. However, this does not mean that they abandon their ideals or ethnicity. Hence, we begin to see a more positive if, at times, still ambivalent response towards African Americans. Two respondents stated:

> Those [African-Americans] that I have worked with who are professionals work just as hard as West Indians...But the ones on the lower end...don't work! They don't like work! So, again, I think it has to do with the level of education. Probably that's the very reasons why they are uneducated: they don't work in school either. But those that have managed to come through the school system and become professionals work very hard.

> I wouldn't say [that I have] a lot of black American friends but I am beginning to find out that I tolerate black Americans more than I do Jamaicans nowadays...There is a certain arrogance that Jamaicans have that...is not warranted...and I find it very disturbing...I think it's wrong and I think it's ridiculous...It doesn't do Jamaicans any good and it doesn't do black Americans any good.

Conclusion

Comparing these positive sentiments with the more negative ones discussed above illustrates the cross-pressures under which West Indian immigrants are operating. To repeat: These stem from conflict between socialization in societies that define race loosely and de-emphasize it; and American society which strictly defines "blackness," views it as very salient, and attaches to it a variety of very negative stereotypes. While such stereotypes also exist in the West Indies, culture, politics, and demographic realities conspire to quash them. America is the opposite in all of these respects. West Indians cope with these conflicts in several ways, including: 1) embracing anti-black sentiments; 2) rejecting anti-black sentiments and identifying with African Americans; 3) ignoring race altogether and focusing instead on achievement; 4) procrastinating with respect to becoming citizens, thereby maintaining psychological distance between themselves and anti-black stereotypes; and, 5) positing themselves as role models for African Americans. This latter formulation attempts to combine distancing and identification by holding that values emphasizing achievement effectively separate West Indians from some African Americans, but that should the latter emulate these values they too will achieve success.

Although West Indians do score higher on several socio-economic indices than do African Americans, a more comprehensive view of the situation reveals that several groups score much higher than do West Indians in terms of their socioeconomic indicators. For instance, while the median family income of Trinidadians significantly exceeds that of African Americans ($33,206 to $22,429), it still falls below the median for the nation as a whole ($35,225) and far below, say, that of Asian Indians ($49,309). Similarly, with respect to secondary education, we find that 70 percent of Jamaicans over 25 years of age have graduated from high school. This exceeds the figure for African Americans (66 percent) but falls below the average for the whole country (78 percent) and many Asian groups—for example: Asian Indians (87 percent) and Filipinos (92 percent).

This implies that though values influence achievement, structural factors may be even more important. Even West Indians, themselves, realize this since in my discussions with them several indicated that they do not expect discrimination against blacks to disappear. Rather, they intend (and exhort African Americans) to maximize the opportunities that present themselves within the existing barriers. Thus, even with respect to achievement, we see contradictory forces at work: a clash between high motivation and values emphasizing hard work and education, on the one hand, and on the other, a pessimistic assessment that attitudes and practices in America still tend to hinder achievement by blacks. In the end, we have to conclude that cross-pressures are a permanent part of relations between West Indians and African Americans since they stem from virtually unchangeable historical and social realities. The growing size of West Indian communities in such core areas of settlement as Flatbush and Crown Heights underscores this fact since immigration is diversifying the black community as much as it is diversifying the population as a whole. Census Ancestry[23] data indicate that roughly 12 percent of all blacks in the Northeast (the region with the highest concentration of West Indians) claim West Indian heritage. Despite these factors, one would hope (as tends to happen over time) that West Indians would eschew their often-negative characterizations of African Americans and recognize that, in several ways, both groups experience circumstances which emphasize their essential similarities in a country that places a premium on skin color.

Notes

[1]Generally speaking, the term "West Indian" refers to inhabitants of the non-Hispanic island in the Caribbean sea, in addition to mainland territories (e.g., Guyana and Belize) with close historical and cultural ties to these islands. Because individuals from the British West Indies—e.g., Jamaicans and Trinidadians—dominate the flow of immigrants to the United States, the term is often used in a more limited sense to refer to these immigrants. See David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 2-4; Philip Kasinitz, *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[2]See, for example, Howard Kohn, "Humiliation, Sunny Side Up," *New York Times Magazine*, November 6, 1994, 42-80.

[3]Consisting of over 100 interviews with foreign-born Jamaican males, these were conducted, using "snowball" methodology, between 1988 and 1990 in the New York City area. These respondents ranged from university professors to mechanics and averaged 41 years of age. They had lived in the United States between 1 and 34 years, with an average length of residence of 11.5 years.

[4]Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1992.

[5]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1993*, 113th edition (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), Table 20. These projections assume net immigration rates of 1,370,000 per year.

[6]The media's coverage of the O.J. Simpson case presents an excellent illustration of this fact. Throughout the trial, they were primarily concerned with the reactions of blacks and whites. The split-screen technique, on the day of the verdict, showing the reactions of whites and blacks, side-by-side, powerfully symbolized the media's fixation on these two groups. They hardly expressed interest in the views of, for instance, Asians or Hispanics.

[7]Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995).

[8]F. James Davis, *Who is Black?: One Nation's Definition* (University Park: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) and Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1980).

[9]Thomas Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1975).

[10]Roy Beck, "The Ordeal of Immigration in Wausau," *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1994): 84-97.

[11]Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), 284; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1981).

[12]Wade Clark Roof, "The Ambiguities of 'Religious Preference' in Survey Research—A Methodological Note," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 44 (3) (1980): 403-407.

[13]Stephen S. Fugit and David J. O'Brien, "Economics, Ideology, and Ethnicity: The Struggle Between the United Farm Workers Union and the Nisei Farmers League," *Social Problems*, vol. 5 (1977): 146-156.

[14]Gad Heumann, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); Douglas Hall, "The Ex-Colonial Society in Jamaica," in Emmanuel DeKadt (Ed.) *Patterns of Foreign Influence in the Caribbean* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 32-48.

[15]Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies*; Carl Stone, "Race and Economic Power in Jamaica," *Caribbean Review*, vol. xvi (Spring 1988): 10-34.

[16]See, Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), 151; George W. Roberts, *The Population of Jamaica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 65; Colin Clarke, *Kingston, Jamaica* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 152; The Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *Pocketbook of Statistics* (Kingston: The Statistical Institute of Jamaica), 27.

[17]Diane J. Austin, *Urban Life in Kingston, Jamaica: The Culture and Class Ideology of Two Neighborhoods* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1987); Nancy Foner, *Status and Power in Rural Jamaica: A Study of Educational and Political Change* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973); Adam Kuper, *Changing Jamaica* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976). This point does not ignore the existence of drug-dealing gangs centered around Jamaican immigrants ("posses"). These, however, do not typify West Indians and are only a latter-day manifestation of social tensions in Jamaican society. Sentiments touting the importance of "education" are more deeply-rooted than is drug dealing.

[18]See, for example, Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity: The Case of Jamaica* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1978); Trevor Monroe, "The Left and Questions of Race in Jamaica," in Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (Eds.) *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Trenton: African World Press, 1991), 283-298; Carl Stone, "Race and Economic Power in Jamaica."

[19]Palmer has shown, however, that greater numbers of immigrants have been entering under the family reunification provisions of the immigration law. Correspondingly, fewer professionals have been emigrating from the West Indies. (*Pilgrims from the Sun* [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995], 34.)

[20]Actually, most of the West Indians whom I interviewed were unfamiliar with the policy but the ones who were indicated ambivalence. One would expect this given that West Indian culture emphasizes merit.

[21]Ira D. A. Reid, *The Negro Immigrant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

[22]Jonathan Kaufman, "Help Unwanted: Immigrant's Businesses often Refuse to Hire Blacks in Inner City," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 1995, A1.

[23]It should be emphasized that these data provide only a rough estimate since they define "ancestry" vaguely; for example, it can be unclear how many generations are being measured and individuals may claim multiple ancestries.

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Black Immigrant Community of Washington, D.C.: A Public History Approach

By Portia James

In the Washington, D.C. area contemporary Black community life has been shaped in large part by a pattern of migration and settlement of African Americans from southern states. But international immigration has also made its mark on the local Black community. Today, Washington and its suburbs in Virginia and Maryland are home to significant populations of Black people from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. This international movement of people has resulted in the broadening of Black community life and the development of a multicultural and multi-ethnic Black population in the area.

Contemporary immigration to Washington, D.C. can also be seen as part of a larger and ongoing movement of Black people within the Western hemisphere. Historically, Black populations in the Americas have been rather mobile—moving from rural to urban areas within regions and migrating across oceans and international borders. This pattern of migration has created regional and international connections among diverse and farflung groups of Black people.

In 1992-1994 Anacostia Museum, a museum of African-American history and culture at the Smithsonian Institution, developed a public history project culminating in an exhibit that looked at people of African descent from Haiti, Jamaica, and Latin America, and their migration to the Washington area. This exhibit, *Black Mosaic: Community, Race and Ethnicity Among Black Immigrants in Washington, D.C.*, examined how the perceptions and realities of race, color, and ethnicity have shaped people's identity in Black immigrant communities; and how those communities have interacted with African American and other American populations.[1]

The *Black Mosaic* exhibit featured—in their own voices via audiotaped listening stations—the personal reflections of Black immigrants on leaving home, arriving in a new country, and making a new life. An exhibition, the archetypical artifact of public history, is an excellent format for discussion of a dynamic subject like immigration.[2] Images of the family, home, friends, classmates; community landmarks; memories of religious holidays and family get-togethers; popular music; and, mementos of events and people, all these things serve as ties that bind immigrants to the places and people they left behind. The exhibition also provides the opportunity to celebrate the diversity immigration has created for the Black diaspora and the United States.

Ethnic and Racial Identity

One of the first and most immediate tasks facing the Anacostia Museum staff was to define the target population for the exhibition. The focus on Black immigration was a source of some confusion and much discussion among the community leaders who were approached and also among the staff: Who exactly was Black anyway? And according to whose standards? Some people whose physical appearance would clearly have them designated as "Black" in this society, claimed not to be so; for example, at the Brazilian community meetings (sponsored by the museum to plan that component of the exhibition) many white-skinned, blue-eyed, blonde Brazilians came and participated. Those attending considered themselves as spokespeople and indeed as representatives of Afro-Brazilian culture. Clearly, there were divergent views about the meaning of what it meant to be Black.[3]

There were also differences about the value of focusing on people of African heritage as a distinct group. Some Hispanic and Brazilian participants, for example, while eager to support an exhibit that would highlight their community's achievements, complained that the focus on race was unseemly and divisive; while others welcomed it as an opportunity to discuss festering racial attitudes and problems. Concerns with privacy (always an issue in community-based exhibitions) became magnified, sensitizing museum staff to other cultural differences concerning race—the realization that it is a big step, for instance, for some people to publicly identify themselves by racial and ethnic labels. What people call themselves, particularly in a public forum, says something about the different communities to which they claim membership. Some participants in the project complained of competing claims for their allegiance, and the assumption by U.S. Blacks that their primary allegiance must be to a shared African heritage. Also, in many Latin American societies custom and the "etiquette of race relations" prohibit open discussion of racial tensions or even racial differences within their population. Not only whites, but some Indian and Black people adhere to this custom, and the focus on race in the exhibit was seen as a distinctly "American" way to approach community life.

Cultural differences also shaped the exhibit staff's research and interpretation of racial identity "at home," in countries of origin of immigrants. Despite the availability of varying demographic approximations, it was, of course, impossible to state with any exactitude the proportion of people that are of African descent in any of the immigrant communities. Different regions and countries have different definitions of who is Black; and racial labeling and categorization differ greatly from that practiced in the United States. Also, African ancestry is often overlooked or ignored in official census of many countries, particularly where people of African descent exist in

small numbers or where there has been significant intermarriage with other groups.

Upon arrival, Black immigrants share difficulties common to all newcomers of the D.C. area: meeting new people, riding the Metro system, and learning new city streets. For those speaking a language other than English, learning the new language becomes a major problem to overcome. Usually, the first people with whom they come into contact and interact are relatives, friends, and others from home. But the diversity of the Washington area soon brings them into contact with people from other immigrant communities. Many come from countries within the same geographic region and thus share language, religion, and other cultural traditions. These shared traditions become the cultural foundation for the emergence of group identities. This sense of solidarity across national and racial boundaries often coexists with loyalties to national groups and with loyalties to smaller communities, such as hometowns or ethnic and cultural groups within the country of origin; it also coexists with feelings of racial solidarity or "Pan-Africanism," no matter how inchoate or militant such feelings may be.

What people call themselves, particularly in a public forum, says something about the different communities to which they claim membership.

Black immigrants arriving before 1964 and the passage of civil rights legislation against racial discrimination recall having to adjust to segregated Washington, D.C. For many, being denied access to public facilities and employment was their first inkling of the impact that U.S. racial attitudes would have upon their day-to-day lives. Immigrants coming from majority Black situations such as in Jamaica and Haiti, were compelled not only to adjust to the new situation of being foreign and a racial minority, but also to accommodate their newly-stigmatized status. Afro-Latinos had to adjust to the unaccustomed social distance between the races, a different system of racial labeling, and U.S. social mores that sought to divide their ethnic community into two racial groups, "Blacks" and "Hispanics." They also complained of having to negotiate in public, work, and social settings where race and color took on entirely new meanings than those they learned at home.

Building a Multicultural Black Washington

Black immigrants began arriving in Washington, D.C. in significant numbers during the New Deal era and World War II. At that time, Hispanic immigration to this area was dominated by the arrival of people from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. The roots of the Spanish-speaking population in the Washington area, now largely Salvadorean and Central American, can be traced back to this group of Caribbean immigrants. Many Black immigrants who arrived in the 1940s and 1950s came to work at international agencies and embassies; some in professional settings, while others worked as domestics for the embassy staff.

Other Blacks came to attend universities here, including Howard University. In the early 20th century Howard University recruited West Indian intellectuals to teach in its departments. They, in turn, attracted many students from the Caribbean to the university and initiated an ongoing intellectual exchange between scholars here and in the Caribbean. There is an active Howard University alumni association in Jamaica, for example, and Howard University's Caribbean Student Association has been in existence since the early 1940s.

For some, the trip to Washington, D.C. is much more difficult than for others. Those who come from communities that were close-knit or that placed greater emphasis on interpersonal relationships or those coming from rural, small town areas, often complain of the impersonal nature and the hurried pace of life in Washington, the loss of family values, and the way of child rearing and parent-child relationships here. To ensure that children here grow up with the kind of family values that they desire, many parents send their children to their homeland to stay with relatives during school vacations. Others send their children for periods of time to be formally-educated and to learn social skills that they would not otherwise obtain. Some participants in the *Black Mosaic* oral history project spoke specifically of the need for their children to avoid the socialization of low expectation and negative imaging that they believe this society imposes upon young Black people.

For newcomers, there are local networks of support and information, marshalling all the resources available to the community, that have been developed over the years by those who arrived earlier. Job information, assistance with immigration problems, news from home, and information about goods from home are exchanged in community newspapers, radio programs, and informal networks.[4] Informal networks, such as local store owners and the elderly of the community, are especially resilient and flexible. For example, the Jamaican-born owner of Coronation Market, a local grocery store, was featured in the exhibit on audiotape discussing the bulletin board from his market:

> Over the years everybody that needs anybody of any business or service, they would call me. I've had women call me and ask me to tell her the name of a gynecologist. Now a man wouldn't know that, but I've had gynecologist customers come here so I am able to do that. People want to hear an address, they want a barber, they want a carpenter, a bricklayer, anything they want...they would call and ask...I have a bulletin board and if you'll look and check you can see that all of the

businesses are Jamaican. I have a big reference book right there.[5]

Additionally, organized cultural activities, ranging from public programs, holiday celebrations, dances, religious activities and political development organizations, all provide Black immigrants with a sense of connectedness, both with the communities from which they came and with the new community here in Washington.

Each year, more Black immigrants move into this international city. They find new challenges and obstacles to overcome as they settle into their new home. And, as mentioned above, they also find many resources and strategies to survive and sustain themselves. The *Black Mosaic* exhibition did not resolve and answer the many questions asked about this issue of immigration and its impact on our society. However, it did present, realistically, the successes, problems, achievements, and connectedness that Black immigrants have within themselves and with the African diaspora.

Notes

[1]*Black Mosaic: Community, Race and Ethnicity Among Black Immigrants in Washington, D.C.* Exhibit brochure. (Washington, D.C.: Anacostia Museum, 1994); Also see exhibit script.

[2]Portia James, "Building a Community-based Identity at Anacostia Museum," *Curator/The Museum Journal*, 39 (1), 1996, 19-44.

[3]*Black Mosaic* community meetings (1991-1993); taped sessions of Brazilian community (May 15, 1991), Rastafari community (September 12, 1991), and Jamaican community (November 12, 1993).

[4]For examples of the community networks, see *Kiskeya*, a locally-produced publication on the Haitian community; Olivia Cadaval and Roy Bryce-LaPorte, *Tirarlo a la Calle* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, n.d.) on the Spanish-speaking communities in the area; and, Phyllis May Machunda, "Migration to Washington: Making a New Place Home," in *1988 Festival of American Folklife Program* (Smithsonian Press, 1988).

[5]See *Black Mosaic* exhibit script.

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Haitian Immigrants and African-American Relations: Ethnic Dilemmas in a Racially-Stratified Society

By Gemima M. Remy

Immigrants of Afro-Caribbean descent have been arriving and settling in the United States in relatively large numbers since the end of World War II.[1] Between 1961 and 1970, the Immigration and Naturalization Service recorded over 37,000 Haitians residing legally in this country.[2] A decade later, there were close to 59,000 Haitians in the U.S. By 1990, the figure rose to 140,200.[3] In 1991 and 1992 alone, 47,500 and 11,000 Haitians were admitted to the United States, respectively.[4] It must be noted that these figures do not include the vast number of undocumented Haitian immigrants which is believed to be around 400,000.[5] Given current trends in Haitian migration, it is estimated that their population will rise to one million by the turn of the century.

Lured by promises of worried-free social and economic living conditions, these newly-arrived immigrants have brought "their tired, their poor, their huddled masses yearning to breathe free" to the land of opportunity.[6] In so doing, they have had to adapt to a society that is structurally and culturally different from their own. They have not only had to learn and develop new linguistic abilities, employment skills and resettlement patterns, they have also had to come to grips with the issue of race and ethnicity inherent in the fabric of American culture. How have Haitian immigrants managed to maintain their unique cultural characteristics while adjusting into the American mosaic?

This article focuses on Haitian immigrants and how they have attempted to interpret their migration experience and ascribed racial and ethnic status in the U.S. It is argued that the legal and economic positions of Haitian immigrants have not only impacted their perceptions and understanding of their living conditions in this country, but they have also compelled them to reassess their self-definition as a distinct group of individuals with their own history, culture, nationality, and racial identity. Like many other Caribbean immigrants, Haitians "suffer double invisibility...as immigrants and black immigrants or double visibility as blacks in the eyes of whites and as foreigners in the eyes of native-born blacks."[7] But, what is the cultural meaning of migration for Haitians? What consequences, both positive and negative, has migration had on Haitian values and belief systems? And, what are the implications for ethnic relations in this country? No account of Haitian life in the U.S. would be complete in the absence of a historical analysis of Haitian migration experiences, and the social and political conditions that have dictated their departure from their homeland in search of the "promised land."

Haitian Migration to the U.S.: A Historical Overview

Haitian migration to the U.S. can be divided into four distinct periods, each associated with a wave of political unrest and economic depression within the country.[8] The first "wave" of migration took place between 1957 and 1964 when the vast majority of Haitian immigrants who came to the U.S. during that period were either from the political and economic elites or from the newly-emerging "Black bourgeoisie" in Haiti. These Haitians fled the country when Dr. François ("Papa Doc") Duvalier was elected president and soon began a regime of terror where opponents of the newly-elected government were either jailed or murdered. Upon migrating to the U.S., these immigrants were not set on adapting to the American society. They envisioned the temporary flight from their homeland as a first step in overthrowing the president. To their dismay, their efforts to oust the Haitian dictator were in vain mainly because the Duvalier regime was fully supported by the U.S. government which, at the time, attempted to portray Duvalier as "the best hope for stability and decent government in Haiti."[9] As a result, these first-wave immigrants were forced to remain in the U.S. and to abandon social and political privileges, power, and wealth which they had amassed in their homeland.

The second wave of Haitian migration occurred between 1965 and 1972[10] and coincided with the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. The vast majority of Haitians who emigrated to the U.S. during that period

were mostly skilled and from the lower and middle classes. They arrived on American shores due to declining economic and political conditions in Haiti, more liberal U.S. immigration laws, and the needs of American businesses to restock their labor force which was severely depleted by the Vietnam War.[11]

When Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier succeeded his father following the death of the latter in 1971, he promised the country an economic revival and a less brutal administration than that of his predecessor. However, stagnant economic conditions soon began to push many Haitians who resided in rural areas to move to Port-au-Prince, the capital city, in search of employment and a better standard of living. Although some succeeded in obtaining jobs, those who benefited the most from the economic revitalization fueled by American capital into the country were the rich and powerful.

Unable to return to the rural areas or to obtain visas through legal means, many of these Haitians left the country illegally (i.e., by boat), thus beginning the third wave of migration which lasted from 1972 to 1982. These immigrants came to be known in the U.S. as the Haitian "boat people." Unlike their predecessors, however, the reception that they received from the American public was lukewarm. Because a majority of these immigrants were largely uneducated and from low socio-economic backgrounds, the American media began to portray them as "ragged, impoverished, illiterate and pitiful individuals."[12] Anti-immigrant propaganda, coupled with a decline in the American economy during the same period, served as a driving force behind the portrayal of Haitian immigrants as "thugs," "needy," and unwanted people who came to the U.S. to "steal" jobs away from Americans.

Haitians "suffer...double visibility as blacks in the eyes of whites and as foreigners in the eyes of native-born blacks."

On February 7, 1986, pressed by both internal anti-government revolts (from young Haitian students and workers who were angry at the Duvalier regime) and external pressure (from the U.S. and other countries that could no longer guarantee continued support and protection for Haitian government officials), Jean-Claude Duvalier was forced to resign and flee the country. Many Haitians living abroad saw his departure as an opportunity for repatriation. Unfortunately, they quickly realized that although Jean-Claude had left the country, oppression and Duvalierism had not. As the political terror and persecution escalated in the country, many left the island, thus giving rise to the fourth surge of Haitian immigrants arriving by boat on Florida shores.

Raymond A. Mohl has stated that "[t]he arrival of the Haitians [in Miami] has created tensions; they have received a less than enthusiastic welcome. Haitian supporters [have] suggested a double standard in American immigration policy—one which welcomes mainly White refugees from Cuban communism but rejects Black immigrants from Haiti. The Immigration and Naturalization Service has refused to accept Haitian requests for political asylum, claiming they are economic rather than political refugees. As a result most Cuban 'marielitos' went free almost immediately [upon their arrival in Miami] but several thousand Haitians were jailed in camps in Miami, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere, in some cases for more than a year."[13]

Hoping to put an end to the long reign of political terror and economic repression, many Haitians went to the polls on November 19, 1987. Backed by the elite who feared a freely-elected president in Haiti, the Tontons Macoutes (the Haitian secret police) were ordered to slaughter as many voters as possible. The next few years following the election saw a period in which the country was governed by a horde of "puppet" presidents who were either elected by the Haitian army or gained power through coups d'état. Then, on December 16, 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president with 67 percent of the votes. For the first time in its history, Haiti, the first black independent nation in the Western Hemisphere, had a democratically-elected president. But, on September 29, 1992, the army staged a coup that forced Aristide into exile, thereby resuming yet another mass exodus of Haitian refugees to the United States. Aristide returned to Haiti a few years later to finish serving his presidential term and relegated power to the current President of Haiti, René Préval, in February 1996.

Haiti-U.S. Relations

Historically, the United States has maintained an on-and-off, love-and-hate and exploitive relationship with Haiti for centuries. Following Haiti's hard-won independence on January 1, 1804, it took the U.S. close to 60 years to finally recognize Haiti as a free republic.[14] Such a recognition, however, was not obtained without a few strings attached. Adopting a "gunboat diplomacy" towards the country, the U.S. sought to keep a tight rein on the military, political, and economic affairs of Haiti—a strategy that eventually culminated in the military occupation of the island from 1915 to 1934.[15] More recently, the United States military intervention in Haiti has raised some eyebrows regarding the U.S. political and economic diplomacy towards the country.

Although America has always had a strained relationship with Haiti, what many people may not be aware of is that Haiti significantly contributed to the development of the United States as a democratic country. Historical accounts reveal that several Haitians took part in the American struggle for independence and fought in such battles as the 1779 engagement at Savannah.[16] Moreover, many Haitians shed "their blood in Georgia, Virginia and Florida...[in the American] fight for freedom and independence." In 1824, the Haitian government raised about $300,000 to liberate and bring back to Haiti

some 6,000 black Americans so that they might live in "in freedom and dignity."[17]

Haitian-African American Relations

> Haitian[s]...face problems with [African Americans] because they speak with an accent and blacks see them as people who have a lot of money when they see them buying houses in a short time. This leads to conflict. One reason is blacks are jealous. [Haitians] are here buying houses, they have two or three jobs, they have no free time....Black people are saying, 'How do they do it?'...They say, 'I live like this for three generations. It took us a while to get a house, a car.'[18]

> [Haitians] want to be accepted as different from [African Americans]...All West Indians say they have no segregation in their home. They are better off in their home....Once they enter this country,...Haitians...are told that the blacks are lower status. So they do not get close to us....[T]hey like to stick to the white side and want white people's approval and evaluate things from the white view. They want to get the white respect and not the black respect....They are brainwashed.[19]

These quotes, from a Haitian immigrant and an African American, respectively, exemplify some of the attitudes and stereotypes held by many African Americans and Haitian immigrants toward each other, and which may have negatively impacted the nature of their relationship. While most Haitian immigrants have a tendency to view African Americans as rude, ill-mannered, unambitious, and rejecting of Caribbean blacks, some African Americans tend to perceive Haitians as condescending "foreign blacks" who behave as if their culture, level of education, and manners are superior to those of black Americans.

Though it can be argued that Haitians are phenotypically indistinguishable from African Americans (i.e., they're blacks), Haitians, like African Americans, have a different history and different cultural values, customs and beliefs which have shaped their perceptions and attitudes toward American society. Due to the racial stratification inherent in the American society, however, once they migrate to this country, Haitian immigrants are not only categorized as "blacks," but they are likely to be subjected to similar discriminatory practices as African Americans and other blacks from the West Indies.

As Philip Kasinitz has pointed out, in the United States, "all persons of *any* known or discernable African ancestry, regardless of [physical] characteristics, are considered 'blacks' and have been subject to all of the social and legal disadvantages that this implies."[20] Moreover, Michel Laguerre has asserted that, unlike many English-speaking Caribbean immigrants, Haitians suffer from a "triple minority status as blacks, foreign, and French- and Creole-speaking" people.[21] What, then, are the costs and benefits of being characterized as either a racial or an ethnic group? What are the implications for ethnic relations between African Americans and Haitian immigrants?

Several plausible arguments have been offered to help explain the nature of the strained relationship that seems to exist between Haitians and African Americans. First, since Haitians and African Americans, as already mentioned, are very much alike in physical appearance, American institutions have tended to lump them together as "blacks" thereby robbing both groups of their distinct ethnic customs, beliefs, and value systems. Faced with a conflict between their self-definition and the definition assigned to them by American institutions, some Haitians have reacted by redefining themselves as immigrants, thereby differentiating themselves from African Americans.

In reality, even though the two groups are phenotypically similar to each other, Haitian immigrants cannot easily assimilate into the black American culture due to linguistic and cultural barriers. Additionally, since many African Americans are apt to view Haitian immigrants as taking away the gains they have accrued in this country, Haitians have been put on the defensive, thus making it harder for African Americans to open up their arms and welcome Haitians into their existing communities.

This is not to say, however, that *all* Haitians shun assimilationist tendencies. Some Haitian parents, for instance, upon arriving in the U.S., push their children to learn and interact in English only and discourage the use of Haitian-Creole materials in the classroom. To these individuals, upward mobility can only be attained through the mastery of the English language and the adoption of middle-class values that are deemed necessary to succeed in the U.S. All the while, many such immigrants try very hard to preserve certain aspects of the Haitian culture (e.g., food, music) that serve as integral links to their homeland. One interesting result of this attempt at maintaining a balance between the home culture and the host society is that while some first-generation Haitian immigrants isolate themselves from the African-American community, their U.S.-born offspring are becoming more and more similar to children of African Americans in terms of the style of clothes they wear, the music they like to listen to, the food they prefer to eat, and so forth. Needless to say, such a development has given rise to tremendous inter-generational conflicts.

It has been suggested that many Haitian immigrants may not share a sense of common purpose and goal with black Americans for basically two reasons: (1) Haitians see themselves as "voluntary immigrants," and (2) view their stay in this country as temporary.[22] Having come from a country where jobs are scarce, Haitians have looked to the United States as a land of economic opportunity and have made the best of what the country has to offer them. In their quest for economic self-

sufficiency and personal freedom, Haitian immigrants show a tendency not to compare their economic situation with that of the white majority or the black minority. Instead, they are more likely to compare their economic gains with Haitians living in the U.S. and in Haiti. In so doing, they "do not feel [a sense of] deprivation and denial in the face of discrimination" in this country as do some African Americans.[23]

Some of the other factors that have contributed to the development of a sense of isolation on the part of Haitian immigrants include the fact that newly-arrived Haitians tend to move right into fairly well-established Haitian communities in places such as New York City, Miami, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago. More often than not, the new immigrants are employed in the same line of work as their friends and relatives, live in the same neighborhoods, buy their foods and other supplies at supermarkets and stores where other Haitians shop, and interact mostly with other Haitians at social functions.[24]

Furthermore, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s has had a significant impact on the nature of race relations in this country. As a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Housing Act of 1967, discriminatory practices are somewhat more subtle than they were three decades earlier. Thus, many newly-arrived Haitian immigrants have not learned to view American society in terms of race relations. Behaviors which most African Americans would label as racist are not necessarily interpreted as such by newly-arrived Haitians. This does not imply that Haitian immigrants are not discriminated against in this country. But, when faced with prejudicial treatment, they are more likely to interpret these experiences as "individual prejudice" as opposed to blaming a system or society that is viewed by many as extremely racist.

Where Do We Go From Here?

It is clear from this review that there are certain stereotypical attitudes held by both Haitian immigrants and African Americans which may have hindered opportunities for intergroup interaction and coalition. In order to enhance relations between Haitians and African Americans, both groups need to be cognizant of the historical context in which they exist and the contributions they have made over the years to their current status as "blacks" living in a racially-stratified society. Haitians, in particular, have to realize that regardless of how "temporary" their stay in this country may be, their population has steadily increased over the past three decades (and will continue to rise into the next century). Consequently, they must begin to adopt what Flore Zéphir has termed a "settler strategy" which would require them to become more pro-active while residing in the U.S.[25] Although at first this strategy may seem threatening, Haitian immigrants need to understand that "[a]daptation to a new country, by no means, implies a denial of one's nation of origin and cultural distinctiveness. It simply means being willing to learn and appreciate differences while taking pride in and valuing one's own heritage."[26]

An important step toward improving Haitians' and African Americans' perceptions of each other is for the former to familiarize themselves with the African-American experience, culture, and unique history. Similarly, African Americans have to become more educated about their Haitian neighbors. One clear benefit for enhancing ethnic relations between African Americans and Haitian immigrants is that in developing a common sense of shared history and awareness of distinct ethnic identities, both groups will be in a powerful position to challenge the status quo in race relations in this country. The increasing number of Haitian immigrants in the U.S. should not be viewed as a threat, but as an asset for building coalitions and fostering harmonious relationships and interactions among blacks of African-American descent and those of Afro-Caribbean ancestry. For, as one Haitian proverb goes: *Men anpil, chay pa lou* (Many hands put together make a heavy load more manageable); in other words, there is strength in numbers.

Notes

[1]Georges Fouron, *Haitian Immigrants in the U.S.: Migration and Identity* (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1989).

[2]Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1993 Statistical Abstract of the United States*. Also see Flore Zéphir, *Haitian Immigrants in Black America: A Sociological and Sociolinguistic Portrait* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1996), 5-7.

[3]Ibid., 5-7.

[4]Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1992 Statistical Yearbook*. Also see Zéphir, *Haitian Immigrants in Black America*, 5-7.

[5]Michel S. Laguerre, *American Odyssey: Haitians in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 25.

[6]Zéphir, *Haitian Immigrants in Black America*, 4.

[7]Roy Simón Bryce-Laporte, "Black Immigrants: The Experience of Invisibility and Inequality," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, 54.

[8]Fouron, *Haitian Immigrants in the U.S.*

[9]Robert I. Rotberg, *Haiti: The Politics of Squalor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), 196.

[10]Fouron, *Haitian Immigrants in the U.S.*, 22.

[11]Ibid., 22-23.

[12]Ibid., 24.

[13]Raymond A. Mohl, "An Ethnic 'Boiling Pot': Cubans and Haitians in Miami," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 51-74.

[14]Jake C. Miller, *The Plight of Haitian Refugees* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 54-55.

[15]Ibid., 54.

[16]George P. Clark, "The Role of the Haitian Volunteers at Savannah in 1779: An Attempt at An Objective View," *Phylon*, vol. 41 (December 1980): 356-66.

[17]"Why Haitians Seek Political Asylum," *New York Times* (Letter to the Editor), November 5, 1979, p. A18.

[18]Tekle Mariam Woldemikael, *Becoming Black American: Haitians and American Institutions in Evanston, Illinois* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1989), 40-41.

[19]Ibid., 40.

[20]Philip Kasinitz, *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 33.

[21]Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 9.

[22]Tekle Woldemikael, "A Case Study of Race Consciousness Among Haitian Immigrants," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, (December 1989): 236.

[23]Ibid., 237.

[24]Woldemikael, *Becoming Black American*, 34.

[25]Zéphir, *Haitian Immigrants in Black America*, 96.

[26]Ibid., 96.

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Cape Verdean-Americans: A Historical Perspective of Ethnicity and Race[1]

By Jean E. Barker

Marilyn Halter, in her study of the Cape Verdean experience in America, stated:

> In the rural areas, racial divisions were not so pronounced as in the cities. As long as Cape Cod Cape Verdeans "stayed in their place," associating with their own kind in their own sectors, a semblance of cooperation and tolerance between groups was maintained. But true acceptance and an end to discrimination on the basis of color has been a long, slow, ongoing process.[2]

In rural Harwich, Massachusetts, this "semblance of cooperation and tolerance" seems to have existed from the very beginning between Cape Verdean immigrants and the townspeople. Town records indicate, for the most part, that the citizens of Harwich officially accepted the Cape Verdean self-designation as "Portuguese." Prior to 1902, except in two or three cases, the two clerk left the category for race blank as he did for other residents of Harwich when registering the marriages of Cape Verdean immigrants. Two facts may have made this easier. First, all Cape Verdean immigrants were issued Portuguese passports. Second, the earliest settlers came from the Island of Brava, where the people were lighter in color. Brava, having had no sugar plantations, had a smaller slave population than the neighboring islands of Fogo and Sao Tiago, whose people began to emigrate in the late 1890s.[3]

After the turn of the century, the term "Portuguese" was often used on Harwich town records to describe the race of Cape Verdean immigrants. It was not until the 1920s that the Harwich town clerks discontinued the use of the term "Portuguese" as a racial designation and followed the state and federal guidelines, describing Cape Verdeans as "mulatto" in the record of marriages. However, the terms "mulatto" and occasionally "Portuguese" continued to be used until 1971 when the practice of noting a person's race was discontinued entirely.[4]

Before the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896), which recognized de jure segregation in the United States, there was no category for recording the race of a child when registering a birth in Harwich. Between 1897 and 1902, the town clerk recorded only two babies as mulatto, omitting any designation for all other babies. With a change of clerks in 1902, the designation of Portuguese was initiated for Cape Verdean babies until the mid-1920s, when the terms dark, light, olive, mulatto, and Portuguese were substituted. Julia Ramos, a Cape Verdean midwife in Harwich, used the term "Portuguese" almost exclusively until the 1920s, when she occasionally used "malada" and "molato" when recording the race of the babies she delivered. Dr. John P. Nickerson of Harwich recorded almost all Cape Verdean babies he delivered as "Portuguese." In contrast, Dr. E. S. Osborne of West Dennis recorded them as white, Portuguese, black, and colored.[5] In 1922 the town discontinued the practice of listing Cape Verdean births separately in the annual reports, as had the *Harwich Independent* in 1919.[6]

The people of Harwich were certainly conscious of the racial factor in these early years, as indicated by the references to the "white" students in the segregated school debates of 1905. They did not refer to Cape Verdeans as Negro or colored, even when some expressed great prejudice and argued emotionally in favor of a segregated school. Although prejudice was certainly directed against Cape Verdeans, it was probably not entirely due to their mixed racial background. Without denying the existence of racial prejudice, it is important to note that much of the rhetoric of the early decades of the century reflected the anti-immigrant bias of the time. There was a great wave of nativism which swept the country at that time and was directed against foreigners in general, particularly the "new immigrants," who appeared to threaten the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant vision of America.

In 1922 the *Harwich Independent* celebrated its fiftieth birthday and in an article noting the changes which had occurred during that half century, the editor wrote that the town had witnessed "the advent of foreign nationalities...filling the places of manual labor."[7] During

the decades of Cape Verdean immigration, the *Harwich Independent* made many references to Afro-Americans, but never equated the racial background of Afro-Americans with the racial background of Cape Verdeans. In 1900 the paper reported on a concert in Harwich by a quartet of "colored singers" from Tuskegee Institute in Georgia; it reported on the lynchings of "Negroes" in various parts of the country; and in 1932, it reported a story about the escape of a "colored" prisoner from the Nantucket jail. In 1929, there was also the reprint of a picture with its caption from another newspaper which identified Sweet Daddy Grace as "a Portuguese negro minister."[8] However, never did the *Harwich Independent* make any reference which indicated that they did not accept the self-designation of Cape Verdeans as "Portuguese," a designation which stressed their foreign rather than their racial identity. In fact, the only time there was any reference in the paper to the racial background of any town residents was in the 1905 separate school debates when there were references to the "white" students.

Early press coverage by the *Harwich Independent* consistently referred to Cape Verdeans as "Portuguese." Coverage of the Cape Verdean purchasing of homes and later bogs, the funeral of a young child, the accidental shooting of a teenage girl by her brother, all use "Portuguese" as the sole designation of Cape Verdeans.[9] This continued description implies an overall sense of a people regarded as outside the mainstream, as foreign, but never classified or confused with Afro-Americans. Examples of such descriptions range from a reference to the "Portuguese section of Island Pond cemetery" to "Our Portuguese contingent are at the railroad station daily with beautiful bunches of this early Spring flower (Mayflower)," or "Influenza is not sufficiently stamped out in the Portuguese localities to lift the ban from the schools."[10]

Such descriptions contribute to the picture of two separate worlds co-existing, but not merging. We derive from these multiple references and descriptions what Marilyn Halter described as a "semblance of cooperation and tolerance" based on the reality that Cape Verdeans lived in their own sectors and were "staying in their place."[11] Harwich Cape Verdeans had created a social world of their own and therefore experienced little blatant discrimination. When asked directly, most of those interviewed agreed that when discrimination existed, it was subtle. In Harwich, Cape Verdean immigrants were successful in rejecting attempts to classify them solely by race. They succeeded in substituting an identity which was accepted by the town that was based on ethnicity and race rather than on race alone.

The pattern of news coverage which reflected the existence of a separate community existing alongside the larger community very gradually changed as Cape Verdeans became more integrated into the larger community. One early factor which contributed to their integration was World War I. In June 1917 the *Harwich Independent* reported that the Board of Registrars had enrolled 117 Harwich men who were eligible for the draft, "including about 20 Portuguese."[12] Instructions were given for the draft form which required registrants to list their race, place of birth, citizenship, or intention to become a citizen. Additional updates on the status of the draft noted that some Cape Verdeans were ineligible because of their alien status.

Some Cape Verdeans, such as Frank Raneo, John Raneo's father, enlisted and used their military service to earn their citizenship. John Raneo explained:

> My father was in the Second Field Artillery of Massachusetts...a non-segregated unit...Like all the Cape Verdeans in Harwich who enlisted at that time, he was listed as Portuguese and white, which cause a lot of problems depending on the color of the skin.[13]

In fact, Frank Raneo died in 1933 in a veterans hospital from lung complications resulting from his wartime service.

When the first Harwich boy was claimed as a victim of the war, a Cape Verdean classmate, Albert Gomes, was one of his pallbearers, and when the town raised a sixty-four star service flag over Exchange Hall in August 1918, there were three Cape Verdean men represented by stars. There was no reference to anyone being "Portuguese" when the town honored those who had served in the military, including many Cape Verdeans, with a day in the park and a celebratory dinner.[14] Military service appears to have been a vehicle whereby native-born Americans recognized the commitment of many immigrants to the United States. The shared wartime experiences helped contribute to the growing acceptance by many of the immigrant groups.

As with other immigrant groups, the public school system accelerated the Americanization of the children. There were never any special references to the ethnicity of Cape Verdean children when they merited news coverage for academic, athletic, or other school honors.

By the late 1920s and 1930s, there were very few references to the "Portuguese" in the *Harwich Independent*. Most news coverage omitted any ethnic designation, as in the report of Joseph Ramos' killing of a 6′3″ copperhead, or in the 1931 article titled, "Harwich Boy Re-Enlists" which proudly announced that Abel Gomes, who was home on leave, had re-enlisted in the Navy after completing two tours of duty.[15] There were still occasional references to the "Portuguese," but news coverage and personal recollections of Cape Verdean-Americans after the mid-1930s indicate that Cape Verdeans in Harwich, if not fully accepted and free of discrimination, had successfully begun the "long, slow, ongoing process" toward full and complete integration and acceptance.[16]

As previously stated, Cape Verdean immigrants in the United States worked to establish their own unique ethnic identity in an effort not to be grouped with Afro-Americans. On the Cape Verde Islands they were

Portuguese citizens and identified as Portuguese. In the United States they persisted in stressing their identification as Portuguese, claiming the right to self-designation rather than accepting one imposed by an exceedingly race-conscious society. As one immigrant stated: "We are not black, we are Portuguese. We know we have black in our blood, and white."[17] In the turn-of-the-century United States any amount of African ancestry guaranteed an identification by society as "Negro," complete with its history of slavery and discrimination. Cape Verdean immigrants appreciated the compounded difficulties they would endure as immigrants if classified solely by race.

Cape Verdeans, by establishing their own communities, eased the adaptation process to a society which was increasingly antagonistic to both immigrants and blacks. They consciously worked to avoid the consequences of being identified as black, preferring to be identified by their ethnicity rather than by their race. Cape Verdeans consciously identified themselves more with other immigrant groups from the small villages and farms in Catholic, southern Europe than they did with Afro-Americans. Eugene Texeira, when describing the Cape Verdean customs concerning courtship and marriage, stated:

> If you married, you were married, that's your wife. It was strict in that time. It was the same all over Europe, Italy or any place. If a girl got married, her husband has to be the first one she knows.[18]

Similarly, when Tina Raneo explained the hard times experienced by Cape Verdeans during the Depression years, she likened their experiences to those of other immigrant groups, like their Italian neighbors, with whom her family shared a slaughtered pig.[19]

Cape Verdean immigrants in Harwich were successful in establishing a separate community with self-designated cultural identity as Portuguese, distinct from the culture of Afro-Americans. They found a community where jobs and affordable land were available and where they could co-exist in a community which maintained a "semblance of cooperation and tolerance."[20]

By the 1930s the years of heavy immigration were over. Restrictive legislation enacted in 1921 and 1924 which became fully operational in 1929, severely limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States. In addition to a dwindling number of immigrants, the Depression and the war in Europe also contributed to the dissolving of close ties with the Islands. Employment, the educational system, military service in World War I, all worked toward affirming the identity of the first and second generation Harwich Cape Verdeans as Cape Verdean-Americans. Although Cape Verdeans in Harwich still retained many of the characteristics of their cultural heritage, such as living in predominantly Cape Verdean neighborhoods, socializing, for the most part, with other Cape Verdeans, enjoying traditional Cape Verdean foods and celebrations, and speaking Crioulo with the older folks, they were accepted as an integral part of the Harwich community.

The integration and assimilation into community life, however, does not deny that discrimination and prejudice continued to be part of the Cape Verdean immigrant experience. All those interviewed believed that when discrimination in Harwich occurred, and it did occur, it was expressed subtly, rarely overtly. For those who moved outside the area, however, there was no recognition for them as a distinct cultural entity; they were judged on race alone. The examples of racism, prejudice, and discrimination cited by those interviewed illustrate clearly the ludicrousness of the race system in the United States.

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Betty Pina recalls vividly her anger in high school, when the editor of the school paper wrote an article suggesting that those speaking a foreign language on school property be reprimanded and prohibited from doing so in the future. Being the only students in the school who occasionally spoke in another language, Betty and her Cape Verdean friends were angry. "But, that didn't stop us. We went as a group to him and told him we would do what we had to do and then take the consequences from the principal."[21] She also recalls that most of the Cape Verdean students chummed around together, not mixing socially very much. "As young children in the school, we would congregate among ourselves."[22]

When asked about any personal memories of discrimination in Harwich, Eugene Texeira stated:

> There was nothing wrong here. We don't stand for that. On the job we eat together, joke together, deal with each other man to man.[23]

Yet, when he travelled to Florida, after having lived in the northeast for several years, he was exposed for the first time to a segregated society. Ignorant of local customs, he horrified a black shoeshine man by hopping into the chair and requesting a shine. Fearful of the white reaction, the shoeshine man begged him to get out of the seat before trouble erupted.[24]

World War II was a consciousness-raising experience for many of the Harwich Cape Verdean men. Outside the small area of southeastern Massachusetts, the Cape Verde Islands were unknown and most Americans classified anyone with black ancestry as black. Many Cape Verdean men, assigned to all-black units, experienced overt discrimination for the first time. Some, like Betty Pina's

husband, Rufus, served in all-white units.

In 1941 John Raneo volunteered for the Air Corps, hoping to fly. Enlisting locally, he encountered no problems for he was Portuguese. However, to the racially-conscious Air Corps of 1941, there was a problem. As Chief Raneo stated, "They didn't know what to do with me."[25] He remained in Springfield, Massachusetts earning promotions, but not an overseas flying assignment. Eventually he was assigned as an officer in charge of black infantry troops. It was in Georgia that he experienced blatant racial discrimination for the first time. With the perspective of time and a strong sense of self-worth, Chief Raneo related, with amusement, the wartime confusion over his identity.[26]

During the 1960s and 1970s it became increasingly difficult for many Cape Verdeans to maintain their non-black identity. Many young Cape Verdeans, like many young black Americans at that time, developed a pride in their African heritage. To many American blacks, the insistence by some Cape Verdeans of their cultural distinctiveness appeared to be a form of racism.[27] After Cape Verdean independence in 1975, it was difficult for many older Cape Verdean-Americans to identify with Africa rather than Portugal. When asked how they identified themselves, several of the older people interviewed answered, "We are Portuguese."[28] None of those interviewed denied their African heritage, but all asserted the importance of their distinct cultural heritage as Cape Verdeans. Belmira Nunes Lopes expressed the feeling of so many Cape Verdeans about their proud and distinct heritage in her statement:

> We should not be lumped with any other groups—we are not Puerto Ricans, we are not Afro-Americans, we are not Mexicans, we are Cape Verdeans...I want people to recognize me for what I am. I guess I am just proud of what I am, and I do not want people to think that I am anything else...How can I deny that I have African blood in me? It is evident...Nevertheless, I want to be recognized as a person with a distinct culture. It is a blend of many races and many cultures dominated by the culture of Portugal...It is the basis from which Cape Verdeans are going forward and asking to be recognized as a minority group.[29]

Notes

[1]This article is based on an excerpt of the author's master's thesis entitled, "Cape Verdean Immigrant Experience in Harwich, Massachusetts." (University of Massachusetts: December 1993).

[2]Marilyn Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity: Cape Verdean Immigrants* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 123.

[3]*Official Record of Marriages 1848-1889.*

[4]*Official Record of Marriages 1890-1950.*

[5]*Official Record of Births, 1848-1895*; *Official Record of Births 1896-1950*; *Record of Births, 1915-1930.*

[6]*Annual Report for the Town of Harwich 1922*; *Harwich Independent*, February 12, 1919.

[7]*Harwich Independent*, August 22, 1922.

[8]*Harwich Independent*, August 21, 1900; October 13, 1932; October 2, 1929.

[9]*Harwich Independent*, September 19, 1893; May 8, 1894; March 20, 1907.

[10]*Harwich Independent*, November 19, 1913; March 24, 1912; October 23, 1918.

[11]Marilyn Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity*, 123.

[12]*Harwich Independent*, June 6, 1917.

[13]*Harwich Independent*, August 29, 1917; John Raneo, interview with author, May 28, 1993.

[14]*Harwich Independent*, June 27, 1917; August 18, 1918; September 3, 1919.

[15]*Harwich Independent*, August 27, 1930; August 26, 1931.

[16]Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity*, 123.

[17]Eugene Texeira, interview with author, June 14, 1992.

[18]Ibid.; Raneo, interview.

[19]Raneo, interview.

[20]Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity*, 123.

[21]Betty Pina, interview with author, April 29, 1992.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Texeira, interview.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Raneo, interview.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Deirdre Meintel Machado, "Cape Verdean Americans," in *Hidden Minorities: The Persistence of Ethnicity in American Life*, Joan H. Rollins (Ed.) (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 243.

[28]Texeira, interview; Louis Fernandes, interview with author, 14 June 1992.

[29]Luisa Maria Nunes, *A Portuguese Colonial in America: Belmira Nunes Lopes* (Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1982), 202, 203.

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Caribbean Migrant Experiences in Church and Society

By J A George Irish

Introduction

One of the greatest ironies of the Caribbean community in New York is, that it is at one and the same time, both "power-full" and powerless. Its power lies essentially in a relatively untapped and latent potential, whereas its powerlessness rests in its virtual immobilization as an ethnic group. By dint of sheer numbers the Caribbean presence, whether solely anglophone/West Indian, or more broadly representative of the wider Caribbean Basin, is a formidable force to reckon with, since over 30 percent of the immigrant population of New York is Caribbean. In fact, they are among the fastest growing immigrant groups. Just a cursory look at the Labor Day Carnival in Brooklyn provides dazzling proof of a dynamic physical presence that has explosive social, cultural, and economic potential, which has not yet been harnessed for a sustained development agenda capable of transforming the political image and influence of Caribbean immigrants in New York.

Few people can challenge the intellectual contributions and creativity of Caribbean immigrants in their diverse spheres of activity. From elementary school and the crafts and trades, through high school and the hallways of academia, the superways of history are strewn with garlands left by valedictorians, scholars, orators, inventors, and Nobel laureates. Undoubtedly, Caribbean leadership in this city has played no mean role in the social and political life and history of New York. The names of Marcus Garvey, Claude McKay, Hulan Jack, James S. Watson, J. Raymond Jones, Shirley Chisholm, and Constance Baker Motley decorate the corridors of power at all levels. And yet, somehow, the story of our collective life and achievement is characterized by powerlessness, punctuated with reversals and stagnation in areas where the promise of success was always inspiring—education, the justice system, small business sector, and alternative financial institutions. Periods when Caribbean immigrants were known primarily for their academic skills and passion for learning, or for steering clear of the police and the long arm of the law, or for the vision of the Paragon Progressive Community Association and Federal Credit Union, are now sentimental memoirs of the past.[1]

The undeniable reality today is that many of our youth are faring badly in school; many are dropping out or being truant; many are in low-performing schools that are under state review now; many are in the juvenile justice system through PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision), or in correctional facilities. Foreign-born inmates in the state prison system, who are from the Caribbean, have increased over 170 percent during the past decade and account for one of the largest foreign groups in custody. So when we speak of powerlessness, it is this lurid scenario that poses a challenge to the community as a whole, and to the Church, in particular. To confront this challenge, some serious self-definition, self-scrutiny, and self-focus is vital on the part of religious leaders and institutions.

Self-Definition

In the context of our discussions today the migrant "Church" has to define itself before it can chart any effective mission. It must be decided whether to operate within the "mainstream" only, or whether to engage the "periphery"; and even then, one has to determine who decides what is mainstream or "established," and what is peripheral or cultist. Colonial heritage has bequeathed to us certain clear cut definitions which one may choose to abandon in order to accommodate or embrace a broader spectrum of religious persuasions within the Afro-Christian community. One has to decide definitively with whom one wishes or intends to associate as part of the initial strategy for facing up to the challenge.

One logical question for the migrant community is: To what extent is this consultation open to evangelicals and fundamentalists, or by extension to revivalists, Spiritual Baptists (Shango worshippers), Pocomania, Vodun, Santeria, etc. A second follow-up question would be: Being away from the home base with all its inherent

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social biases, is it possible for immigrants in a particular ethnic community to engage in interfaith dialogue on their adopted home turf? A third and inevitable one must be: To what extent has the ecumenical spirit of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (multinational, multidenominational, and multilingual) been transferred to the new home ground?

Self-Scrutiny

These basic questions are intended to lead into the issue of self-scrutiny. The migrant church inherits a dual legacy, the colonial sense of history that even newly-independent states have not yet overcome, and a novel metropolitan, cultural style that is part of the multicultural amalgam forged in large urban environments. The former nurtures a traditional model and mission that often resists change and outreach; the latter is an overwhelming awareness of the powerful value of money in church affairs.

It would be of great interest to investigate how many church leaders truly see the Church as a change agent, or how they perceive change. For many, the Church's mission is often restricted to a narrow vision of evangelism and discipleship without the concomitant thrust for stewardship and outreach. This has adversely impacted the Church's role in matters related to education, employment, health, immigration, and housing. Besides, the negative attitudes to counseling, psychotherapy, and politics have prevented many families and individuals from developing and contributing personally to a wider process of community development. The history of Caribbean churches and their relationship to governments has not fostered any major social outreach. Apart from the Roman Catholic schools, the Seventh Day Adventist schools, hospitals and colleges, and a few isolated cases, the Church has generally left this side of social services to the governments. The immigrant church leadership has inherited that outlook and avoided the risk-taking involved with major investments in these services to their constituents and parishioners.

The Church's capacity as an agent of change and a social facilitator requires sound organizational and institutional reappraisal. The proliferation of Caribbean churches, community-based organization, benevolent societies, and fledgling small businesses has denied the Caribbean immigrant community of any significant and enduring historical institutions that have been able to serve as de facto instruments of change and development. At another level the Church is frequently bedeviled or blessed with ministers who work full-time outside of the Church and may or may not lack formal training, or who have very scarce human and financial resources, thus imposing severe limitations on the scope of the operations of the Church.

This raises further questions about the kind of administrative training provided for ministers within the established curriculum, as well as the possibilities for short-term, tailor-made courses for practicing clergy.

Self-Focus

The primary challenge for the Church in its broadest sense and its training arm, the seminaries, is to re-examine its philosophy, mission, and leadership style in the face of the basic needs and social realities of its membership and the surrounding community. The principle of stewardship involves more than just members' responsibilities to meet their financial and service obligations to the Church. It extends their duties to the family, at the workplace, and in society at large. It, therefore, speaks volumes about parenting skills, work attitudes, fiscal management, and civic duties. In this regard, the Church ceases to be just pulpit-centered and assumes the practical role of an educational and training forum to equip people with survival strategies for an increasingly difficult world. Inspirational messages on salvation, spiritual growth, and the "prosperity theology" have to be matched by informational groundings for social transformation, industry, productivity, sacrifice, and service.

The Church needs to transform its auxiliaries into informed action groups that are agents of change.

Similarly, outreach must evolve out of stewardship and lead to advocacy and activism. The Church needs to transform its auxiliaries into informed action groups that are agents of change. It is not enough to have knowledgeable and talented youth, men, and women meeting for prayer and Bible study, or socializing in sacred oblivion to the stark realities crying out for their urgent attention. The Church must also respond to instances where:

- Caribbean students are being pushed into special education classes as learning disabled, hearing impaired, defective in speech, simply because there is an initial difficulty in communication;
- Caribbean youth are incarcerated as first offenders, some naively, some innocently, some under false arrests, simply because no one is available to demand their release nor provide character references, nor monitor the legal process to ensure that justice is not only done, but is seen to be done;
- Caribbean families are disintegrating, facing difficulties of transition and adjustment from the home society and social environment to a new setting, because no formal structures and services are in place to provide early orientation and support for new arrivals; and,
- Caribbean families are being shattered by the effects of deportation, drugs, and violence.

This daunting backdrop is a clarion call for the Church to adopt a more assertive and aggressive stance as the premier social institution of the Caribbean immigrant

community. The Church needs to consider how to organize effective services like transitional programs for immigrants and families, a parent empowerment program, citizenship drives and a voter education and registration drives, and programs aimed at improving economic and community development.

These are some of the issues and areas where denominational barriers need to fall and give way to coalition-building and the interfaith ecumenical spirit. Neighborhoods can be reclaimed, reconstructed, and redirected through collaborative ventures that bury self-interest and earnestly pursue the common ground. Herein lies the resolution of the dichotomy cited in the initial irony around power. The powerless and fragmented immigrant community has no sound political or financial springboards from which to leap forward. However, the Church can offer the leadership consciousness that can support institution-building, and thereby unleash the potential for powerful explosion.

Note

[1]Clyde G. Atwell, *A Passion to Survive: A Credit Union Grows in Brooklyn* (New York: Pageant-Poseidon, Ltd., 1976), documentary.

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The Linkage Between African Americans and the South African Black Immigrant Community

By Chris Nteta

An understanding of the South African immigrant experience in the United States requires placing it within a context of linkages and alliances between transported South African blacks and the African American community. Like many other nationalities, South African black immigration to this country resulted from people fleeing the murderous apartheid regime whose national constitution and laws enshrined a racist ideology buttressed by a myriad of draconian practices. In this respect, South African immigrants were predominantly refugees and exiles on a quest for asylum. On the other hand, this group exhibits distinctive political tendencies which sets it apart from other such groups in the U.S., particularly those from "independent" Africa.

The confluence in the United States of this culture of resistance with that of African Americans, both sharing a commonality of oppression under racial capitalism, provided a terrain of united struggle and a foundation for a coalition of forces. This mutuality of experience and struggle between South African blacks and African Americans, I submit, constitutes one of the distinguishing features of the South African black immigrant experience in the U.S. It defines the close relationship and strong bonds that tie the two groups together. Born in adversity and nurtured over three decades of joint struggle, this struggle is the theater where the South African immigrant experience has taken place. The focus of this essay is to chronicle, briefly, the ways in which South African exiles forged links with their African American counterparts to mount a campaign to combat the U.S.-South African government axis, as well as to advance the cause of the fight for freedom and justice for blacks in America.

The "wind of change"[1] that decolonized and gave independence to African states in the post-World War II era and blew foreign rule out, nevertheless left the Southern Africa region in the throes of white minority rule. It is this struggle against the remaining ramparts of European imperialism in the decades of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s which shaped the experiences, engaged the energies, and focused the political attention of the immigrant South African community in the U.S. Coupled with the complementary nature of this struggle and giving it added impetus and reinforcement was the United States' multifaceted support of the apartheid regime, consisting of economic, military, diplomatic, technological assistance, and even ideological comfort. Corporate America's contribution, consisting of four hundred U.S. companies in South Africa, was a critical pillar of support, perpetuating the economic viability of the apartheid regime.[2]

In South Africa the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, where 69 blacks were killed and 186 wounded, provided the catalyst for an increased flight of political activists.[3] The declaration of a state of emergency lasting for months, the banning of the people's organs of resistance, and the arrest and incarceration of hundreds of militants created such a hostile and dangerous environment that many left the country. It is important to note that this massacre plunged the country into a massive economic crisis. The stock market fell and foreign exchange holdings dropped while foreign corporations withdrew vast sums of capital.[4] To stem the tide of this financial hemorrhage and rescue the faltering economy, some U.S. corporations increased their investments, immediately by $23 million, while a consortium of ten U.S. banks led by Chase Manhattan and National City banks of New York provided a $40 million revolving credit to South Africa. This was corporate America's direct response to the Sharpeville massacre.

A critical development around this period in the U.S., and one which crystallized the alliance of African Americans and the South African immigrant community was the policy formulation of "constructive engagement." A secret National Security Memorandum (NSSM 39), authored by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, revealed the deep ideological ties existing between the U.S. and South Africa, a policy that condoned and secretly supported apartheid. It urged the U.S. to relax political isolation and economic restrictions on the white states (of Southern Africa), declaring, "...that the whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for

blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence which will only led to chaos and increased opportunities for the Communists."[5] It was this flagrantly racist U.S. policy that greatly facilitated the emergence of a united front of South Africans and African Americans.

Initially the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. was led and dominated by white, liberal groups such as the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). However, it was later rooted in the black community because African Americans decided to operationalize a principle enunciated by Frederick Douglass that: "The man who suffered the wrong is the man to demand redress—that the man STRUCK is the man to CRY OUT—and that he who has endured the cruel pangs of Slavery is the man to advocate Liberty. It is evident that we must be our own representatives and advocates, not exclusively but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends."[6] This stance was critical for African Americans to adopt in order to work closely and effectively with blacks in South Africa. (White, liberal leadership would not have been effective in making this linkage.) This is a lesson that must be repeated today as Americans seek to develop ties with black organizations in Africa.

This is a lesson that must be repeated today as Americans seek to develop ties with black organizations in Africa.

There is a good example of the collaborative efforts of South African blacks and African Americans regarding this issue. The Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement and the Pan-African Liberation Committee (PALC) were two organizations that worked together for the liberation of South Africa, and reflect the bridges that were built. The former represents the Disinvestment Campaign, while the latter embodies the beginning of the Divestment Movement.

The Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement[7]

One of the most dramatic expressions of unity in action between black America and South African immigrants occurred in Cambridge, Massachusetts beginning in October 1970. IBM and Polaroid were two U.S. corporations alleged to be implicated in the notorious Pass System in South Africa by supplying the technology that made passes tamper-proof. A group of black employees at Polaroid exposed the fact that Polaroid had links with South Africa since 1938. This group, Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement, initiated a campaign against Polaroid by issuing a leaflet with three demands: 1) that Polaroid should disengage from South Africa; 2) that it should make a public statement in both South Africa and the U.S. confirming its position with regard to apartheid; and, 3) that it should contribute its profits to recognized liberation movements in South Africa. Despite challenges by employees in the past, Polaroid had blithely continued to operate a lucrative foreign market that profited from the gross exploitation of black workers. Joining forces with South Africans and risking their careers and livelihood, these workers launched an international boycott that forced the company eventually to terminate its operations. This action had vast repercussions for other multinational corporations as they too, came under close scrutiny for their support of a regime that was fast becoming a pariah in the international community. Among some of the notable actions spurred by this campaign were the hearings conducted by the United Nations Special Committee On The Policies of Apartheid.[8] The ANC and PAC endorsed this action, while the black community in Boston, in an unprecedented act of solidarity, donated a $10,000 gift from Polaroid to the liberation movements in South Africa.[9] And the staff of a key community-based organization, Roxbury Multi-Services Center, persuaded its board to return a grant from Polaroid, electing to take a pay cut instead.

The joint campaigns by African Americans and South African immigrants against Polaroid ushered a new phase of the struggle against apartheid and represented a quantum leap in a campaign, which by early 1984, resulted in fifty-one U.S. corporations withdrawing from South Africa. The galvanized black community in Massachusetts was to play a major role in such future campaigns as the Krugerrand campaign and the passage of the first-ever state disinvestment law prohibiting the investment of public pension funding in firms doing business in South Africa.

The Pan-African Liberation Committee

In the mid-1980s, nineteen states, seventy cities and counties, along with colleges and universities in the United States enacted policies of divestment against South Africa. The divestment movement targeted U.S. entities holding stock portfolios in companies doing business with South Africa. One of the largest of the educational institutions to vote to divest was the University of California system with $3.1 billion in South African-related stock holdings.

The genesis of this movement can be traced to the Pan-African Liberation Committee (PALC) formed in 1971. The nucleus of this group was African American and African students at Harvard University who spearheaded a campaign to pressure the University to divest its vast holdings in companies doing business in Southern Africa, in general, and Angola, in particular. The Gulf Oil Corporation became the focus of this group. According to the Pan-African Liberation Committee, "Through its investment policies, Harvard University has exhibited a complete disregard for the human rights of African people by its continued economic support of the Republic of South Africa and the Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique."[10]

In Spring 1972 the PALC engaged in a series of public activities designed to build support and raise public awareness of the University's investment policies and its complicity in the exploitation of blacks in Southern Africa. Among the most dramatic of these was an one-hour occupation of the first floor of University Hall on February 24 and the planting of 500 black crosses in Harvard Yard on March 6, symbolizing Portugal's killing of Africans in Angola. These activities culminated in a six-day occupation of Massachusetts Hall by some forty black students. The support and endorsement of PALC's act by the Harvard-Radcliffe Association of African and African American students and the black faculty, fellows, and administrators at Harvard was further evidence of the symbiotic relationship of African American and South African immigrants. These dramatic events captured national attention and triggered the beginning of what eventually became an avalanche of support for the South African cause: from divestment campaigns on campuses across the country to selective purchasing and procurement legislation at state and local levels, which banned goods and service contracts with companies with ties to South Africa to legislation prohibiting public pension funds invested in financial institutions with South African interests. The high point of this national effort was the passage by the United States Congress of selective and mandatory sanctions against the apartheid regime, contributing to its eventual fall.

Conclusion

This brief overview is obviously highly-selective in its profile of groups and campaigns illustrative of this joint venture of African Americans and South African immigrants. It is also limited, in large measure, to Massachusetts. The central theme however, remains one which we can never overemphasize. The presence of South African immigrants in the United States, their close embracing of the struggle of fellow African Americans and vice versa, created the conditions for the birth of a new society in Africa; and ultimately, the destruction of the last outpost of white hegemony on that continent. In the same spirit of cooperative effort and continued solidarity, it is incumbent upon the new South Africa to use its good offices and to spare no effort in striving for the elimination of all remaining vestiges of racial oppression and exploitation of blacks in the U.S. To do any less would be gross dereliction of responsibility and a betrayal of trust.

Notes

[1]Former British Prime Minister Harold McMillan, "Remarks in South African Parliament," February 3, 1960 in Peter Calvocoressi, *South Africa and World Opinion* (Cambridge, England: Oxford University Press, 1961), 45ff.

[2]"Apartheid and Imperialism: A Study of U.S. Corporate Involvement in South Africa," *Africa Today*, vol. 17, no. 5 (September/October 1970).

[3]Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter (Eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1822-1964* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 332-344.

[4]*African Research Group, Race To Power: The Struggle for Southern Africa* (Doubleday: Anchor Press, 1974), 117. Also see "Partners in Apartheid: U.S. Policy on South Africa," *Africa Today*, vol. 11, no. 3 (March 1964).

[5]"The Secret U.S. Plan for Southern Africa," *Black Scholar*, vol.6, no.4 (December 1974): 44.

[6]Lerone Bennett, Jr., "Frederick Douglass: Father of the Protest Movement," *Ebony*, vol. viii, issue 11 (September 1963). See also the first editorial of *Freedom's Journal* (1827), first black newspaper in the U.S. which stated: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations in things which concern us dearly," in Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America 1619-1964* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 174.

[7]Chris Nteta, "The Polaroid Saga: An Experiment on Blacks in South Africa," *Southern Africa*, vol. iv, no. 3 (March 1971).

[8]"Special Committee on Apartheid Holds Hearings on 'Polaroid Experiment'," UN no. 6/71, (New York: United Nations, 1971).

[9]Another $10,000 donation from Polaroid was sent to the United Front of Cairo, Illinois to help in its struggle against white merchants and law enforcement authorities. As Benjamin Scott, Chairman of the Boston United Black Appeal stated: "The meeting said that the quarantine of South Africa should begin now and that the Boston black community is willing to sacrifice in order to help get that started...This gift triggered an involvement of the Boston Black community in the plight of the Blacks of South Africa and incidentally the plight of a world that permits apartheid without resistance and civil war in Cairo without notice." See *Bay State Banner* (January 7, 1971).

[10]See Pan African Liberation Committee: "Harvard's Investments in Southern Africa," *Black Scholar*, vol. 3, issue 5 (January 1972): 28.

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Explanations for African Immigration

By Kwaku Danso

Africa is a continent in crisis. Sub-Saharan Africa today poses the greatest development challenge facing the world today. Many of Africa's development programs have failed miserably. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have attributed this failure to inefficient internal economic policies pursued by African governments. These governments, on the other hand, blame failure on uncontrollable external factors in the world economy, such as international financial markets, worldwide recessions, declining commodity prices, protectionist trade policies against African exports, and the oil price shocks of the 1970s. While there is merit to each of these schools of thought, there is also increasing consensus that the level of human resource development and the limited supply of well-trained and experienced professionals to manage the continent's social and economic development programs accounts partly for the continent's appalling living conditions.

The continent spends over $4 billion on technical assistance annually. There are nearly 100,000 foreign experts in Africa, more than at independence, which is a manifestation of the crippling shortfall in indigenous African capacities.[1] This shortfall has been the result, in part, of the immigration of highly-trained and talented professionals and technicians from Africa to the developed countries, particularly the U.S. According to the United Nations Development Program, some 60 percent of Ghanaian doctors trained in the 1980s are now working abroad leaving a critical shortage in Ghana's health service.[2] Hopefully, this essay will provide some of the theoretical explanations for African immigration; and help African policy makers formulate workable policies to stem the tide of the immigration of African-skilled personnel.

Causes of the Brain Drain

A survey of the literature on immigration shows an overemphasis of the theoretical model of "push" and "pull" in analyzing the dynamic nature of African immigration. Critics argue that this theoretical model tends to overstress the "instrumental motivation."[3] The "push-pull" model fails to consider the possible complexity of the psychological and socio-cultural process that leads to the move or stay decision. Suffice to say, therefore, that it would be wrong to identify any single factor as causing immigration.

High on the list of "push" causative factors of the immigration in sub-Saharan Africa has traditionally been economic. Adherents to the economic school hold the view that people immigrate ultimately to improve their economic well-being.[4] The economic stimulus can then rightly be seen as a response with some exaggeration, to economic incentives emanating from disequilibria between and within sectors of the economy and between countries and regions.

Kenneth Ojo goes further, adding that these economic factors go beyond the personal element of salary to encompass the macroeconomic performance of the country and the extent to which it can provide the requisite infrastructure for trained experts to utilize their skills.[5] The macroeconomic conditions at home should be significantly worse because people do not immigrate for the sole purpose of gaining a slight economic or professional advantage. The economic gains must be significant enough to outweigh the strong natural desire to remain at home.[6]

Let us take a look at the socio-economic picture of sub-Saharan Africa and how it might have contributed to the immigration. Sub-Saharan Africa has deep-seated and multifaceted socio-economic problems. For example, out of more than one billion people living in the developing world on less than $375 per year, over 16 percent live in sub-Saharan Africa. This region is projected to have 30 percent of the world's poor by the year 2000. Whereas incomes of most of the world's poor living in East and South Asia rose in the 1980s, they fell in sub-Saharan Africa. Though infant mortality and school enrollment rates have continued to improve for most developing countries, this has not been the case for sub-Saharan Africa, for every major indicator of human development has either stagnated or declined for the poor in this region.[7]

Africa's debt has risen sharply since the 1980s to about $315 billion, about two and a half times greater than in 1980. Sub-Saharan Africa's debt more than tripled during the same period. Debt servicing alone cost Africa over $26 billion in 1991.[8] Africa's terms of trade dropped by 10 percent in the latter part of the 1980s while its share in world markets has fallen by half since 1970. Sub-Saharan

Africa now accounts for less than 2 percent of all world trade. And Africa's share of foreign direct investments flowing to developing countries fell from 16 percent in the 1970s to 3.5 percent in the 1990s.[9]

The incidence of sub-Saharan Africa's poverty can be linked to the economic and political mismanagement in the face of unfavorable economic conditions resulting in inefficiency, low productivity, meager returns on investment and the concomitant low rates of economic growth which have not kept pace with population growth. Per capita incomes have declined from an average of $600 in 1981 to $340 in 1993.[10]

The growth of sub-Saharan Africa's agriculture by over 2 percent per annum over the past three decades notwithstanding, the population has galloped by 3.1 percent per year, doubling in about 22 years annually by 1988.[11] Sub-Saharan Africa's socio-economic problems have retarded the region's progress on all fronts exacerbating long entrenched problems of hunger, poverty, disease and illiteracy. As the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) noted at the Khartoum Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development, an estimated 70,000 Africans with middle and high level skills had left the continent by mid-1987, up from 40,000 in 1985 due to the continent's socio-economic debility.[12]

On the "pull" factors side of the equation, H. Myint posits that in underdeveloped regions like Africa, the immigration is a symptom of disequilibrium between the typical pattern of expansion of the educational system and its capacity to absorb its graduates.[13] In sub-Saharan Africa, lack of effective manpower planning frequently contributed to oversupply of certain highly specialized skills. African educational expansion has been distorted since the independence era due to the reliance on the belief that economic development can be accelerated through increases in the training of technical people. These people, when trained, cannot be supported materially nor given adequate remuneration, consequently they abandon their homes for so-called "greener pastures." The ease of entry of African professionals into the international labor market has been facilitated by the non-indigenous nature of African educational and training institutions. These institutions, largely inherited from colonialism, prepare students for foreign-oriented qualifications.[14] Additionally, this access to graduate schools and other fields of specialization in the developed countries has often led to overspecialization which in turn leads to the professionals' inability to secure challenging jobs upon their return home.[15]

As A. Speare suggests, international immigration cannot be explained in solely economic terms. He states that political factors, which fall under the "push" end of the spectrum, are frequently more important than economic.[16] Studies such as Kofi Apraku's support the role of political factors in the immigration decision. In the African context, political instability has been the factor which forces trained and skilled personnel to immigrate.[17] Political instability has manifested in frequency and abrupt changes of government, the personalization of political power and the gross abuse of human rights.[18]

Sub-Saharan dictators, with their massive, ubiquitous and intimidating security services sometimes unleash the most unthinkable violence on their people. In 1988 former President Siad Barre of Somalia ordered his military to drop bombs on his people causing the deaths of over 50,000 people. In the 1970s, former President Iddi Amin slaughtered a record of 150 civilians a day.[19] The necessity to suppress the people accounts for the large military budgets of sub-Saharan African states. Political persecution resulting from personal philosophical incompatibility with political authority increases the desire to immigrate.

In several sub-Saharan African countries such as Ghana, Togo, Mali, and Nigeria, there is the growing student dissatisfaction with the political direction of their countries. Failure on the part of governments to address these concerns has led to political unrest resulting in frequent student strikes and sporadic violent clashes with security personnel.[20] These governments respond with closures of the universities making the pursuit of academic work impossible. Professors and students who become politically and philosophically incompatible with authorities find it necessary to immigrate in order to avoid political persecution.

Another political factor is deliberate attempts made by government authorities to fill public sector jobs with specific ethnic groups. In Kenya, this process was referred to as "Kikuyunization" and in Uganda, it was "Kakwanization" in reference to the dominant ethnic groups in the two countries. Highly-skilled individuals who belong to other ethnic groups and are denied jobs or promotions leave the country. This was the case in Kenya where a sizable number of its senior professors together with other highly skilled individuals were lost to international organizations in the immediate post-independence period.[21]

An important factor that is often left out in discussions on the causes of immigration is the prestige associated with foreign travel especially, to developed countries. During the colonizing of Africa, the colonialists sent selected candidates—mostly children of supportive and friendly chiefs and other allies—to metropolitan countries for further studies. These individuals returned to their respective countries to occupy some of the best positions and displayed lifestyles with much higher status than those of locally-trained people. The perception developed, therefore, is that in order to "make it" in society, one had to go aboard.

Factors which could be categorized as "pull" from the developing countries include the demand for manpower in such specialized fields as engineering, medicine, and computers in the industrialized countries. Immigration allows these countries to save on expansion costs in the industrialized countries' universities.[22] Ironically, the small West African country of Togo has sent more physicians and professors to its former colonial master,

France, than France has sent to Togo.[23] It is with object of making it easier for the skilled manpower to immigrate to the developed countries that immigration laws in developed countries are designed to favor these individuals.

Karadina Oscar hypothesized the "the higher the level anomies found among professionally trained individuals sharing the same success goals as the world scientific community and having innovative responses, the greater the likelihood that they will leave their home country to work abroad."[24] Oscar argued that exaggerated bureaucratization, lack of resources, and lack of institutional support are sources of frustration and anomie. Studies have shown that in some developing countries, highly-trained and specialized personnel are sometimes supervised by people with much lower levels of education and knowledge. Promotion is therefore based upon extra-professional criteria. Such professional and skilled personnel who have these experiences often fall into highly unsatisfactory situations. They then begin to look for other ways of reaching their goals, especially traveling abroad. African professionals, skilled personnel and scientists who accept the success-goal identified by the world scientific community, but do not have the wherewithal to achieve it in their own countries, tend to immigrate. These individuals, as D. M. Chorafas found out in the case of European immigrants, are still proudly African but because they have no hope of proper recognition and progress in their respective countries, immigrate.[25]

To these individuals, the economic factors that pulled them out of their societies are justified.

Additionally, expenditures for research and development are significantly higher in the productive/industrial and higher education sectors. In sub-Saharan Africa these expenditures tend to be higher in the general services sector. Hence, the skilled personnel who is deprived of a conducive environment for the performance of his/her research activity also becomes a prime candidate for immigration. The interesting point is whether or not these immigrants are allowed to put their skills to good use once they settle in the U.S.

Immigrant Empowerment

The major problem that African immigrants face once they arrive in the U.S. is finding jobs that are commensurate with their educational training and experience. The skilled immigrants succeed in securing lucrative and comfortable positions in academia, the medical profession, engineering, and private entrepreneurships. To these individuals, the economic factors that pulled them out of their societies are justified. To ensure community solidarity and social and economic empowerment, various African nationalities have formed national and community/ethnic associations to deal with these kinds of problems. However, national associations have been weak due to people's preference for their ethnic groupings. For example, a continental organization, like the African Association of Georgia, is not receiving much support. On the other hand however, the Ethiopian community has been more successful at pooling their resources together to purchase gasoline stations, liquor stores, and restaurants.

Because these empowerment associations have been more of a social club, they have not been able to influence politics in the U.S. nor their respective countries. Although there are no reliable figures on the number of African immigrants in the U.S., estimates are said to be around one to two million.[26] Therefore, if this group was to be organized, it could be a potent force in U.S. domestic and foreign policy. However, problems ranging from finding the necessary support structures for themselves, their immediate families in the U.S. and Africa, do not permit these immigrants to engage in the kind of organization that will ensure group social, political, and economic empowerment. Attempts at group solidarity and empowerment have been hampered by a strong degree of individualism and the struggle just to maintain what one already has.

These problems notwithstanding, the African immigrant communities tend to display a strong sense of community solidarity in time of need, especially when death hits a member or when a member is in serious trouble. Traditional practices and cultural messages, such as outdooring a newborn child or mourning the dead, are utilized for mobilizing people, albeit more ad hoc, than permanent. A challenge for this community, therefore, is balancing a sense of powerlessness with a strong nostalgia for their home countries, while resisting acceptance in the new society.

Notes

[1]*The African Capacity Building Initiative: Toward Improved Policy Analysis and Development Management in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991), 5.

[2]*UNCTAD Report of the Fourth Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Reverse Transfer of Technology* (Geneva: United Nations, March 14-18, 1988).

[3]O. O. Okediji and F. O. Okediji, "A Consideration of Some Factors Influencing the Loss of Nigerian Medical and Paramedical Personnel to Developed Countries," *West African Journal of Education*, February 17, 1973, 71.

[4]Aderanti Adepoju, "Linkages Between Internal and International Migration the African Situation," *International Social Science Journal*, issue 303 (1984), 444.

[5]Kenneth Olayinka Ojo, "International Migration of Health Manpower in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Society, Science and Medicine*, vol. 31 no. 6 (1990), 631.

[6]Ibid., 633.

[7]Robert McNamara, "Africa's Development Crisis: Agricultural Stagnation, Population Explosion and Environmental Degradation." Address delivered to the Africa Leadership Forum, in Ota, Nigeria on June 21, 1990.

[8]H. Myint, *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Countries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 238.

[9]Ignatius Ozoilo, "Colours of Hope," *West Africa*, May 6-12, 1996, 714.

[10]Walter Adams, *The Brain Drain* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), 1.

[11]McNamara, "Africa's Development Crisis."

[12]Alex Danso, "The Debt Crisis and Africa's Maldevelopment," *Southern Political Review*, Fall 1990, 75.

[13]Myint, *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Countries*, 250.

[14]Kofi A. Apraku, *African Emigres in the United States: A Missing Link in Africa's Social and Economic Development* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 10.

[15]Apraku, *African Emigres in the United States*, 10.

[16]A. Speare, Jr., "The Relevance of Models of Internal Migration for the Study of International Migration," *International Migration*, G. Tapinos (Ed.) Proceedings of a Seminar on Demographic Research in Relation to International Migration (Paris: CICRED, 1974).

[17]Apraku, *African Emigres in the United States*, 33.

[18]Ibid., 13.

[19]George B. N. Ayittey, "African Dictators," *Emerge*, April 26, 1991, 26.

[20]Myint, *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Countries*, 249.

[21]Amos Odenyo, "An Assessment of the African Brain Drain with Special Reference to the Kenyan Mid-career Professional," *Issue*, vol. ix, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 47.

[22]Britta Karlsson and Solveig Turner, "Practicality of Intermittent Ladder-Level Programs for Health Professional in the Middle East Africa." Paper presented at the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs in Boston, 1987.

[23]Walter Adams, *The Brain Drain*, 2.

[24]Karadina Oscar, "Anomie and the Brain Drain: A Sociological Explanation," (New York, 1982, mimeographed), 1.

[25]D. M. Chorafas, *The Knowledge Revolution* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968).

[26]Daniel Hagan, interview by author, Embassy of Ghana, Washington, D.C., April 20, 1996.

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The Political Issues for African Immigrants in the United States

By Paul E. Udofia

Introduction

Since the 1970s the African-born population in the United States has grown steadily in numbers. This increase of African immigrants offers an historic opportunity for sustained reconstruction of ancestral relationships with Black America. At this point, however, Africans who are mostly English-speaking and highly-educated, remain largely isolated and even ostracized. So, what must be done for these groups, Blacks and African immigrants, to begin working together effectively? This essay begins with one basic query necessary for understanding this potential development: What is the current status of African immigrants in the United States? After providing a brief overview in response to this query, I will highlight a few issues relevant to understanding emerging political relations between U.S. Blacks and African immigrants.

In the 1980s foreign-born immigration to the U.S. reached almost 10 million, the highest numerical peak in history.[1] By late 1993 the foreign-born population reached the 22 million mark. In 1992, the total resident undocumented population in the U.S. was 3,200,000, representing 62 percent from Central America and the Caribbean, 13 percent from Europe and Canada, 11 percent from Asia, 6 percent from South America, and 4 percent from Africa.[2] Despite the small immigration from Africa, the numbers are increasing rapidly.

Overall, African immigrants recorded increases of 228.03 percent (1960-1969), 224.95 percent (1970-1979), and 82.16 percent (1980-1990). The number of Africans admitted between 1960 and 1990 was smaller compared to Europe, North America, South America, and Asia.[3] Between 1990 and 1995, about 196,109 African-born populations were admitted to the U.S. compared to Europeans (840,382), Asians (1,972,588), North Americans (3,357,718), South Americans (368,025), and people from Oceania (31,774).[4]

Sub-Sahara Africa is by far the largest bloc of the ongoing drain of African people to the U.S. In the 1970s, African immigrants were predominantly from South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Cape Verde, and Ethiopia.[5] As one scholar noted, "when Africa as a whole experienced a 9 percent increase in emigration to the U.S. in 1980, the increase for sub-Sahara Africa was 28 percent."[6] Between 1977 and 1980 the sub-Saharan regional component for African emigration to the U.S. increased from 47 percent to 65 percent.[7]

These immigrants, who are highly educated, also have impressive numbers for educational attainment. In 1980, for example, 81.9 percent of them were high school graduates compared to immigrants from Europe (51.2 percent), North America (61.8 percent), Asia (73.0 percent), and Latin America (41.3 percent). Similarly, a higher percentage of Africans were college graduates compared to those of the aforementioned regions.[8] By 1991, 58 percent of African immigrant respondents were found to be either holders of Ph.D. or M.D. degrees, while an additional 19 percent had master's degrees.[9] Nigeria alone had 1,314 practicing physicians in the U.S., of which 60 percent were African-trained, 33.94 percent American-trained, and 4.57 percent European-trained.[10]

Surprisingly, between 1950-1994, only 131,487 Africans were naturalized as American citizens. In 1990, a year in which 369,819 Africans were counted in the U.S., only 123,933 were naturalized Americans compared to 239,886 non-naturalized. A majority were on permanent residency status.[11] Despite strong disparity in the number of naturalized Africans, their overall impressive standing on education implies improved median economic status compared to 1970s.[12] A far more sophisticated and economically-cohesive class of African immigrants, ranging from physicians to university professors, had converged on the American shore.

By 1989, the per capita income of African immigrants was $20,117, compared with $16,661 for Asian immigrants and $9,446 for foreign-born Central Americans. Similarly, family poverty rates varied for the same groups from 11.7 percent for foreign-born Africans to 13.1 percent for foreign-born Asians to 20.9 percent for foreign-born Central Americans.[13] By 1991, "a little over 14 percent of Africans make individual gross annual salaries in excess of $100,000," while 53 percent "earn between $30,000 and $59,999 annually."[14] Thus, by the mid-1980s and thereafter, it becomes clear that a sector of African-born settlers with high median incomes were

well-established, and had acquired some of the tools needed for effective participation in the American mosaic.[15]

The Race Issue

African immigrants not only have attempted to evolve a viable communal foothold on the American shore, but they have demonstrated the potential to become an important voice on issues that shape the direction of American democracy, as well as, events in Africa. Of course, as is the case with all immigrants to the U.S., Africans are immediately confronted with issues related to race. So we must pose yet another question in understanding the implication of this migration: Do African immigrants, as Africans and Black people, have a special role to play regarding race matters in the U.S.?

The status of African immigrants as well as Africa...is directly related to the issue of race, and the political status of Black Americans.

The status of African immigrants as well as Africa, to a certain extent, is directly related to the issue of race, and the political status of Black Americans. For example, when Black America voted approvingly for Jimmy Carter in 1976, the resultant policies of his presidency generated internal changes more favorable to African Americans and African states. Consequently, African build-up in the American world reflected the kind of domestic and international policies which the Carter Administration generated.[16] In 1980, when President Carter lost his bid for a second-term to challenger Ronald Reagan, Black America's historic civil rights gains began to crack,[17] and concomitantly, African immigrants also suffered, including those with advanced education and high skills.[18]

Other developments illustrate how the fate of African immigrants and Africa is partially dependent on Black political activism in the U.S. By 1991, a handful of Black mayors headed majority-white cities, as well as more majority-Black cities. During the 1980s and 1990s, the size and influence of the Black Political Caucus in Washington, D.C., increasingly determined the direction of U.S. policies in Africa.[19] Such developments as the release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa in 1990, and the subsequent end of apartheid marked a leap in the collective struggle to end the threshold of racist exploitation in Black America and Black Africa. These events encouraged greater dialogue between African American and African leaders, culminating in a series of summits in 1991 to examine issues that confront their societies in the spheres of cultural, economics, health, and politics.[20] These summits represented the crossroad of a new epoch, an age sustained not only by the turbulence of Eurocentrism but one witnessing the spiral ending of the centuries of European global conflagration.[21]

But none of the preceding backgrounds imply that African immigrants and African Americans have developed substantive partnership for empowerment in the U.S. as two related and historically-affected groups. Quite often, genuine efforts toward issues of African development by some African Americans are not linked to the concerns of African immigrants in the U.S. And some African immigrants misunderstand the deep-seated problems and history of African Americans. The tacit complications of centuries of dislocation and distortions sometimes compel both parties to behave as if they were unrelated.[22] In worse-case scenarios, the perjury of the American material culture which stratifies these groups allows little or no time for cooperative partnership without one seeking to exploit the weakness of the other.

And, neither does the preceding emphasis imply that intergroup relationships among African immigrants themselves are stable or satisfactory. The success of Ethiopian immigrants, for instance, in places like Washington, D.C., Boston, and Chicago, require linkages with groups, such as Eritreans, who were adversaries in Africa! The same course is necessary for Liberian immigrants, Black South Africans, Rwandans, Somalians, Sudanese, and Nigerians. The duplication of Africa's factionalism among immigrant groups must be avoided if they are to be successful in the U.S., and advance the interests of their home country. This is an issue in which U.S. Blacks can make an important contribution. U.S. Blacks can serve as linkage between African immigrant groups. It does seem that with the recurring U.S. racial crises and growing dysfunctions in African homelands, African immigrants and African Americans are beginning to converge into a significant collective voice on some crises. This is important because the general thrust suggests a strong likelihood of a continuous, historic, and expanding partnership between African immigrants and African Americans.

Inter-generational Crisis

Although U.S. Blacks may serve as a bridge between African immigrant groups, interestingly enough, second generation children of African immigrants can also create an opportunity to strengthen bonds between all of these groups. This role may depend on how effective the offspring of African immigrants in the U.S. are able to maintain their culture in this country.

As African immigrants become a settler community, they must confront the realities of either allowing their offspring to adopt American mores, or doing what they can to educate them along the lines of African traditional cultures. Some have sought to revitalize their African heritage by rotating their children between the African and American worlds for a balanced and educated experience. The emergent crises of African offspring might have been one reason Chinua Achebe urged his Ibo brethren, as well as other Nigerians to "stick to your roots" and "learn about the customs and traditions of our people."[23] Chuks Nwaka reported that Professor Achebe lamented:

> ...about the fact that children born in the U.S. are not taught and do not know how to speak

Ibgo. He illustrated this unfortunate irony by reminding his audience that most children listening to him did not understand what he was saying.[24]

Despite this pessimistic outlook, African offspring can be poised to develop patterns of relationships with Black America that would be markedly different from those of their parents. They do represent a conciliatory generation to Black America; their generational and historical plateau are quite dissimilar to those of their migrant parents. A more faithful blending within the African and African American bloc forms the backdrop of this conciliatory impulse.[25] Black America increasingly will have more potential bridges to connect with Black Africa, as a result of the growing presence of the children of African immigrants.

Conclusion

To succeed in the possibility of collaboration and solidarity, partnership between African Americans and African community leaders and African indigenous scholars is imperative. Either African world crises will be solved through a more faithful alliance between the two kindred groups or there may be conflict. But as I suggested, there is a hopeful possibility regarding this issue and it involves the children of African immigrants in the U.S. The growing numbers of second and third generation African offspring represent substantial historical recreation and continuity within two or more traditions; hence, they can represent two strongly knit cultural amalgams from which to construct a more natural and viable mechanism of survival in urban America, and the overall strengthening of Black communities.

Even if many African immigrants and their children were compelled to return to their homelands, chances are that they would still represent a much needed talent in the cross-cultural and economic contacts between Black America and the land of their fathers and mothers. They could, as well, be one of the most logical assets for use in configuring policy toward Africa. And similarly, they could begin important bridges for many African Americans to reconnect with the land of their great, great, great fathers and mothers. The needs of this possibility are now in place.[26]

Notes

[1]Michael Fix and Jeffrey S. Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1994), 19.

[2]Ibid., 21, 24.

[3]Ibid., 25-27; Also see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Time Till 1970*, 11; "Socio-economic Characteristics of U.S. Foreign-born Population," Table 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, October 17, 1984), Table 1; Susan J. Lapham, "The Foreign-born Population in the United States: 1990, CPH-L-98," Ethnic and Historic Branch, Population Division (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), Table 14.

[4]Fix and Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants*; "Foreign-born Admittance to the United States 1990-1995" (Washington, D.C.: Immigration and Naturalization Service).

[5]U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Socio-Economic Characteristics of U.S. Foreign-born Population," Table 1.

[6]Kofi K. Apraku, *African Emigres in the United States: A Missing Link in Africa's Social and Economic Development* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 41.

[7]Ibid., 41.

[8]Leon F. Bouvier and Robert W. Gordon, "Immigration to the U.S.: The Unfinished Story," *Population Bulletin*, vol. 41 (November 1986): Table 8.

[9]Apraku, *African Emigres in the United States*, 2.

[10]Paul Udofia, *Nigerians in the United States: Potentialities and Crises* (Boston: The William Monroe Trotter Institute/University of Massachusetts Boston, 1996). Also see, Yinka Shoroye and Ancho Emeruwa (Eds.), *Directory of Nigerian Physicians in the United States 1994* (Riverside, CA: Nigerian Medical Directory, 1994), 5-102.

[11]Fix and Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants*, 21.

[12]U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Socio-economic Characteristics of the Foreign-born Population," Table 1.

[13]Susan J. Lapham, "1990 Profiles of Foreign-born Population: Selected Characteristics by Place of Birth, CPH-L-148," Ethnic and Historic Branch Population Division (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), 13 and her subsequent report, "Census Bureau Finds Significant Demographic Differences Among Immigrant Groups," Public Information Office, #CB93-165 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, September 1993).

[14]Apraku, *African Emigres in the United States*, 7.

[15]Udofia, *Nigerians in the United States.*

[16]Ibid.

[17]See James E. Blackwell's examinations of the "Reagan Administration and Blacks" and "Relationship Between Blacks and Presidents Carter and Reagan," in *The Black Community: Diversity and Unity* (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1985), 77, 270; See also the following articles from *State of Black America: 1990*, Janet Dewart (Ed.) (New York: National Urban League, 1990): John E. Jacob, "Black America, 1989: An Overview"; David H. Swinton, "The Economic Status of Black America During the 1980s: A Decade of Limited Progress"; and, Gene S. Robinson, "Television Advertising and Its Impact on Black America."

[18]Udofia, *Nigerians in the United States.*

[19]Rod Bush (Ed.), *The New Black Vote: Politics and Power in Four American Cities* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1984), 1-11; *Black Power in Chicago: A Documentary Survey of the 1983 Mayoral Democratic Primary in Chicago, Vol. 1* (Chicago: Peoples' College Press, 1983), 1-6.

[20]Charles Whitaker, "Black Leaders Meet in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, To Build a Bridge of Cooperation Between Two Continents," *Ebony* (August 1991): 116-122; Coretta Scott King, "Investment in Africa is in Our Best Interests," *Detroit Free Press*, June 1, 1993, 20-23; Peter Uduehi, "Reinvesting Western Investment in Africa at Tuskegee," *African Business Source* (May 1992): 7, 21, 39.

[21]Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 4-413.

[22]Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of the Black Leadership* (New York: Quill, 1984), 342, 436; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Norton & Company, 1992), 88.

[23]Bon Uzzi, "Chinua Achebe at a Nigerian Gala." *The Good Hope News: The African Perspective* (Dallas), July 1991, 1, 17.

[24]Chuks Nwaka, "A Call for Cultural Rejuvenation," *Nigerian News Digest* (Asheville, N.C.), July 1991, 7.

[25]Udofia, *Nigerians in the United States.*

[26]Ibid.

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Leadership in the African Immigrant Community: Conflict and Coalition

By Mfon Ufot

Whenever African immigrants gather, most assuredly the conversation of their plight to the United States, will be a heated topic. Most of the discussion laments the apparent apathy in the African community and the lack of collective leadership to mobilize it. According to the 1990 census, there are over 350,000 African in the United States and that number is increasing every year.[1] The State Department's Information on Immigration reports about 20,000 Africans won the "immigration lottery" to emigrate to the United States last year. This year, about 20,000 slots are allotted to the African continent.[2] This program is a part of the diversity immigrant visas given to countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. Nevertheless, all 20,000 of the lottery winners may not be able to emigrate to the United States because of stringent requirements by the State Department. It is therefore timely and important to examine the leadership development in the evolving and everchanging African immigrant community already living here, as citizens of the United States.

Community leadership infers the ability to have a vision, interpret that vision, and carry it to fruition. Surely, there are outstanding and successful individuals, organizations, and even businesses in the African immigrant community, which although confronted with serious obstacles, have managed to build strong coalitions that address issues affecting most African-born groups in the U.S. Through personal leadership African-born groups have combined individual efforts to mobilize their community or groups to achieve given goals. Unfortunately, there are also many obstacles to overcome in order to achieve those goals.

Historical Background

In order to understand the obstacles that African immigrants face, one needs to look at the history of the community in the United States, as well as the leadership development on the African continent during the 1950s and 1960s (when many of the countries were fighting for independence). In the 1960s and early 1970s, young Africans came to the U.S. to pursue and complete their education in hopes of returning home where jobs were waiting for them. Many countries invested millions of dollars to finance their citizens' education. Others came independently to pursue their dream of attaining a good education. However, as economic conditions deteriorated in some of their countries, students opted to stay in the United States after graduation, believing their stay would be a short one. This, of course, was not the case; the economic conditions continued to worsen and many African decided to settle in the U.S. for a while.

For some Africans who studied abroad, the sole reason for returning home was to help develop their communities. But serious efforts made towards African development in the late 1950s and 1960s were bound to be problematic for the future. Their inclination to the European world values was certain to work against African interests. Events in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, and Rwanda suggested that Black Africa's growing dysfunction could be blamed on Africans while their perpetrators were even created as sympathizers and helpers. But, while many African leaders were fighting for independence from their colonial masters, it was easy for many to lay down their differences, at least for a while, and answer the call of duty. Simply put, a common enemy was identified and when Africans came together, they were able to fight and win their independence; no longer subject to colonial domination. After their success, however, many of the leaders reverted to their old ways of suspicion of one another, a seed sewn by the colonial masters. The triumph was still not enough to erase years of strife. The emergence of an African community in the U.S. is, therefore, a by-product of these unfriendly forces.

Reasons for Conflict

Even as we might agree that Africans are catching up with the dynamics of collective leadership within their community, it must also be noted that as settlers, their community structure is quite unstable. For example, while there are many organizations and associations representing ethnic groups and countries, an umbrella organization that advocates for all groups is not readily accessible in the African community. There are some people who believe that the umbrella group may not be necessary at this point and time. They are quick to

indicate that African immigrants are beginning to create opportunities to work together accomplishing specific, defined goals. However, this is only a starting point. To use another example, note that Atlanta is bracing itself for the 1996 Summer Olympics, in which all African countries will be represented. Initially, each of the communities were going to organize events to welcome the athletes from their respective countries, but the organizers realized that many countries would be left with no representation. As a result, the entire African community plans to find ways of supporting their countries but also creating a centralized information network to assist all African athletes.

Even as the community continues its efforts, the pitfalls are clear that may prevent collaboration:

- The clash of cultures: While the American culture glorifies and indeed encourages individual achievement within the umbrella structure, the African tradition emphasizes tribal and ethnic achievements at the community level. Consequently, balancing the two cultures is quite treacherous. Many Africans, while not wanting to disregard the culture they were reared in, are also aware that in order to succeed, they have to adhere to some of the principles of the American culture.
- For many Africans, their first loyalty is to the tribes and then to the state of origin: There have not been any national "movements of pride" linking disparate groups in the last several decades. So when circumstances help to create an environment for African settlers to work together to achieve a goal, it represents a relatively new experience, i.e., to lay down differences and work towards a common goal. As mentioned earlier, the involvement of the colonial masters in the affairs of the African people was designed to divide and create mistrust among the people; there are still manifestations of this legacy.
- African settlers also have to deal with economic insecurity caused by racism and lack of or inability to access the American system: There are many Africans who are highly-educated, but still unable to obtain well-paying jobs. In order to take care of families, they have to take any employment they can find. This creates frustration and anger in many instances.
- Although they come from the same continent, African immigrants have to deal with religious, ethnic, cultural, and even language barriers in order to work together: Sometimes the barriers and conflict may be overwhelming to the leaders. It sometimes seems easier to retreat back to the familiar territory of ethnic groups instead of spending the enormous energy needed to organize such a diverse group. There have been instances where the national body of a country had to disband because the members had chosen to form their ethnic associations instead of working out their differences. The community therefore becomes disjointed with no umbrella organization to unite the people. Another minefield closely linked to this background is the potential conflict between those seen as the intellectuals versus the non-intellectuals in the community. Many times there may be tensions because one group feels excluded from the activities of the community. As leadership develops, particular attention needs to be paid to these concerns so that all groups are brought to the table to participate.

Coalitions

The African immigrant community is a relatively young one that is coming to grips with its changing role in the U.S. While there may not be an organized community or leadership structure, some people are still emerging as leaders based on their involvement in the African immigrant community. These leaders have been able to organize their communities in times of need. A good example is the annual African Unity Day celebration organized by a local radio station in Atlanta. This event brings people of African descent together to discuss issues of concern to Africa and the diaspora.[3] In 1994, the African community, in collaboration with the National Black Arts Festival, organized, "Celebrate Africa," an event that showcased the works of art from Africa and the diaspora.[4] We are beginning to see more and more of these events where people can come together for a specific purpose. Another example is the establishment of the African Children's Fund. This organization dedicates itself to supporting and fulfilling the needs of African children. This group has successfully networked with many communities and received support from various sources in order to assist African children in a variety of capacities. They have shipped thousands of books and school supplies to Africa for humanitarian and educational causes.[5]

As leadership in the community develops one must pay attention to the similarities among us, but also differences. This fact became apparent as the community organized for the second annual African Unity Day. It was through negotiations and discussions that the format for the event was established. This was a great achievement considering the diversity among the organizers and participants. These successful community efforts will hopefully translate into other community accomplishments on a consistent basis. Events like African Unity Day should be fostered to demonstrate the ability to work together at identifying issues of mutual concern to the community, as well as, mapping out a Pan-Africanist agenda for our future. The community must also become economically and politically savvy.

We must be mindful that every group or person that comes into the community is not there for the best interest of the community. Some see it as a good opportunity to enrich themselves by using the resources in the community. Information and products pertaining to Africa seem to be very popular at this time; and because these things are not easy to come by, many people are aligning themselves with the African community to obtain them. Currently, there is a group attempting to host an African conference. One of the sponsors, according to media information, is said to be an African organization.

Unfortunately, this African organization, for all practical purposes, is non-existent. There are no meetings being held and no activity taken place, however the committee still proclaims the existence of the organization. Furthermore, there are no Africans serving on the organizing committee, at least not in any decision-making positions. Many people blame this problem on the African community's lack of coordinated effort. But that cannot entirely be the case.

Those who support the inclusion of women in leadership development see women as the hope to re-establish a strong leadership base here....

There are two areas that should be addressed in terms of improving the political capacities of emerging leadership; this includes the role of women and second generation Africans in the U.S. This is the right time for the community to redefine the role of women. The male-oriented leadership style in the African community, where women are delegated to work with the children and coordinate social gatherings, have not served the African community well. Those who support the inclusion of women in leadership development see women as the hope to re-establish a strong leadership base here, in the U.S., and the African continent. This role is not strange to African women. Historically, women like Queen Nzinger and Queen Nefretiti, were the military and community leaders of the 18th century. Recently one of the women presidents of an African organization in the U.S. was able to mobilize not only her community, but many other businesses, individuals, and groups in the Atlanta area to raise millions of dollars worth of medical equipment and books.[6] Furthermore, since African women sometimes marry out of their native tribes, they do not have such strong and unyielding loyalty to those tribes or ethnic groups as most men do. This again, would lend to their ability to be more open-minded in discussing issues that affect the entire African immigrant community and not solely their individual tribes.

The same kind of argument can be made for second generation Africans. Many of these young Africans seem to have the skills to negotiate the treacherous waters of the two cultures. Even in cases where parents attempt to instill the bias they grew up with, many of the children are choosing lifestyles of their own and do not seem to have the strong bias that is plaguing their parents. For example, two students at an American university may be from the same African country with similar family values. However, these two youngsters may also be from rival ethnic groups, which would cause their parents to disapprove of the friendship. Fortunately second generation children are refusing to be dragged into the ethnic politics of their parents.

As this new community evolves and leaders come and go, we cannot underestimate the power and the importance of linking leadership and agendas to the needs of the grassroots sectors. This linkage will ensure a firm foundation, enthusiasm, and a "checks and balances" system needed to hold leaders accountable as Africans settle in the U.S. We need leaders with a clear vision of where we need to be as a community in this country. We also need leaders who reflect Pan-Africanist thinking and who can rise above their ethnic origins, but also recognize the role that upbringing plays to shape our lives. Leaders must be entrepreneurs who can work with a range of individuals and organizations that all help to mold this budding community into a powerful voice in American and African societies. Those leaders are amongst us now.

Notes

[1]Susan J. Lapham; "The Foreign-born Population in the United States: 1990 CPH-L-98," Ethnic and Historic Branch Population Division (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), 21.

[2]See Public Notice 23203, "Bureau of Consular Affairs, Registration for the Third Year of Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (DV-97)," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 1996).

[3]The African Unity Day Celebration was organized to examine issues of greater cooperation and empowerment within the African immigrant community of Atlanta.

[4]"Celebrate Africa" was organized by the African community in partnership with the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. This event provided an opportunity to showcase a variety of cultural artifacts and exhibitions on creative work from Africa and the diaspora.

[5]As a consultant to the Africa's Children Fund, I know firsthand the work being done by Victor Mbaba, executive director, and his staff to support African children in the United States and in Africa.

[6]Mrs. Mabel Green, president of Liberian Community in Atlanta, was able to break new grounds where some of her male predecessors failed.

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Signs, Symbols, and Slave Culture: Representations in *Black Thunder*

By Sandra M. Grayson

Black Thunder (1936), by Arna Bontemps, is a historical novel that recreates Gabriel Prosser's 1800 slave revolt. This novel is useful in reviewing some of the historical and cultural linkages between Black slaves in the U.S. and African cultures. Thematically, *Black Thunder* does more than represent Black people's self-assertion through revolt, it also shows their assertion of identity through practicing Atlantic (or western) African traditions, especially those of the Kongo. This is a topic that continues to be significant in light of greater contemporary political and economic linkages between U.S. Blacks and Africans, as well as increasing African immigration into the U.S. Black community.

Bontemps represented in fiction what Simon Brown, a former slave in Virginia, witnessed and experienced during the period. In the narrative "How the Slaves Helped Each Other," Brown explains how the slaves would come together like a family to help a sick member:

> Women would come over just to sit a spell and sing and pray around the sickbed. Nobody was left to suffer alone. Sometimes a man or woman with a healing touch would brew an herb tea, mix a poultice, or apply peach tree leaves to a fevered brow, to help the sick get well. And all this loving care cheered up the troubled soul, whether he got well or died.[1]

This coming together as family is represented in *Black Thunder* when Bundy, the slave who is savagely beaten nearly to death by his master, is on his death bed. The narrator describes how the slaves pray for Bundy's life:

> Moonlight made shadows of uplifted arms on the wall above his heap of rags. There was a chorus of moaning voices. There were faces bowing to the earth and bodies swaying like barley. Oh, Lord, Lord-Lord...Knee-bent and body-bound, thy unworthy chilluns is crying in Egypt land...La-aawd, Lord...Wilt thou please, Oh, Massa Jesus, to look upon him what's lowly bowed and raise him up if it is thy holy and righteous will. Oh, La-aawd. La-aaaawd-Lord...[2]

Although Bundy dies shortly after this scene, he is not alone.

Bundy's funeral exemplifies the connection between Black folklore and Atlantic African beliefs in the novel. As the funeral scene commences, the narrator emphasizes that "the Negroes remembered Africa in 1800."[3] Hence, Africa is set up as a symbol of home and origin for the slaves before the funeral begins. The slaves perform an African burial to send Bundy to the land of the dead and to the slaves' ancestors and to ensure that his spirit will not haunt the living. In traditional African societies, the family members are obligated to perform the proper burial for their kin.[4] In *Black Thunder*, the entire slave community assumes the responsibility, an assumption which indicates that the dead slave is a member of the larger slave family. The African burial symbolizes family and home for the members of the slave community as well as for Bundy, whose spirit is "squatting there beside that pile of dirt, squatting like a old grinning bullfrog on a bank,"[5] while the burial rites are being performed.

A close reading of the scene shows that the burial is connected to Black folklore as well as to its origin in Atlantic African beliefs. These connections can be made by comparing aspects of the scene to descriptions in *Drums and Shadows*, a collection of Black folklore from the Georgia Sea Islands. During Bundy's funeral, the slaves leave food for his spirit:

> Put a jug of rum at his feet [his favorite drink]. Roast a hog and put it on his grave...How them victuals suit you, Bundy? How you like what we brung you?[6]

This ritual is very close to practices explicated in *Drums and Shadows*. The following two examples, which also emphasize the need for the spirit to have food, highlight the similarities between this aspect of *Black Thunder* and folklore:

> [1.] Duh spirit is hungry jis lak duh pusson. Yuh hab tuh put food in duh ruhm fuh duh spirit tuh come and eat.[7]
>
> [2.] At duh fewnul, dey kills hawg an hab plenty tuh eat. Duh reason fuh dis is so dat sperrit hab plenty at duh las.[8]

In many Atlantic African cultures (such as Igbo, Yoruba, and Asante) during a traditional burial, food is left for the dead person's spirit so that the spirit will not be hungry on the journey to the land of the dead.

Other folkloric aspects of the burial scene in *Black Thunder* are the song and ritual movement or dance. During the funeral, the slaves

> ...raised a song without words. They were kneeling with their faces to the sun. Their hands were in the air, the fingers apart, and they bowed and rose together as they sang. Up came the song like a wave, and down went their faces in the dirt.[9]

Given the importance of the circle in many Atlantic African ceremonies, it is reasonable to speculate that the slaves are in a circle during the dance detailed in the

previous passage. Based on this premise, one can see the parallel between the burial practices in *Black Thunder* and those discussed in *Drums and Shadows* in which people form a circle or "ring" and move around the grave:

[1.] Wen we hab a fewnul, we all mahch roun duh grabe in a ring. We shout an pray.[10]

[2.] [An observer of a funeral from the "old days" remembered that] dey dance roun in a ring an dey motion wid duh hans. Dey sing duh body tuh duh grabe an den dey let it down an den dey succle roun in duh dance.[11]

The reference to the motion of the hands and the singing in quotation [2] appears to be akin to the previous passage in *Black Thunder*. The slaves in the novel may even be singing the body to the grave as is the case in quotation [2].

That the mourners in *Black Thunder* have their "faces to the sun," "the sun was far in the west," and the word "sun" is repeated about five times in the scene—these phrases are also significant.[12] In reference to Africans and burial in *Drums and Shadows*, one person said that when an African dies his countryman sits up all night, and in the morning "he go out an pray tuh duh sun..."[13] Robert Farris Thompson in *Four Moments of the Sun* pointed out that most rituals and initiations in the Kongo take the pattern of the circle of the sun about the earth:

> The Kongo cosmogram mirrors the birth of a person, in the rising of the sun; the maximal power in a vertical line which culminates with the sun at noon; the death and decline in the lowering of the sun and its disappearance beneath the sea or earth.[14]

Given the relevance of the sun in the Kongo cosmogram and the importance of circles in many Atlantic African ceremonies, it seems clear that the sun (and looking toward the sun) is significant in the African burial detailed in *Black Thunder*. In Kongo terms, the reference to the sun signifies the life cycle. At the end of the scene, the sun is far in the west lowering and disappearing, movements which mean death and decline in the Kongo construct.[15] Since the implication in the scene is that Bundy receives the proper burial, his spirit will join the dead ancestors.

Another Kongo influence in the scene is the mourners' hand gestures. During the burial, "their hands were in the air, the fingers apart," a *booka* gesture according to Thompson:

> *Booka* refers to holding both hands above the head, fingers wide apart. The word refers to crying out for help, weeping, and proclaiming.[16]

Also of importance in this scene is the reference to Ben, an old slave owned by Mr. Moseley Sheppard, kneeling down (and joining the singing and moaning) "at the place where the two worlds meet."[17] The cemetery, in traditional Kongo belief, is

> ...a door *(mwelo)* between two worlds, a "threshold" marking the line between the two worlds, of the living and the dead, circumscribed by the cosmic journey of the sun.[18]

Furthermore, in the Kongo, "the graves were the principal medium through which the living communicated with the dead."[19] Hence, the reference in *Black Thunder* to where Ben kneels means that he kneels at the threshold where the world of the living and the world of the dead meet and shows the close connection that the living have with the dead in the novel.

Booka gestures, singing, and dancing are among the folkloric elements that come together in the burial scene in *Black Thunder* to reinforce the connection between Black folklore and African beliefs in the text. The novel represents Black people asserting themselves not only through revolt, but also through practicing Atlantic African traditions, actions which show the slaves as actors in history. Given the cultural detail that is intricately interwoven into *Black Thunder*, as well as the depth and richness of the text, it is curious that the novel "never enjoyed wide popularity."[20] One may ponder if today's readers of fiction are prepared to contemplate the theme of Black people's assertion of an independent identity, or are they only prepared to accept the perpetuation of myth? This is a query that concerns many Blacks in the United States, as well as African immigrants in this country.

Notes

[1]See *The Days When the Animals Talked* compiled by William J. Faulkner (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1977), 35.

[2]Arna Bontemps, *Black Thunder* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 33.

[3]Ibid., 52.

[4]See the following texts as a starting place for additional information about traditional African burial practices as well as beliefs about the dead ancestors: Wande Abimbola, *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa* (Lagos: Unesco, 1975); Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture* (New York: G.K. Hall and Company, 1992); Robert Farris Thompson, *Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (Connecticut: Eastern Press, 1981).

[5]Bontemps, *Black Thunder*, 53.

[6]Ibid., 52.

[7]Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 114.

[8]Ibid., 160.

[9]Bontemps, *Black Thunder*, 52.

[10]Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows*, 155.

[11]Ibid., 180.

[12]Bontemps, *Black Thunder*, 52-53.

[13]Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows*, 106.

[14]Thompson, *Four Moments of the Sun*, 43.

[15]The four moments of the sun are dawn, noon, sunset, and midnight. When it is midnight in the world of the living, the sun is shining in the world of the dead. Thompson, *Four Moments of the Sun*, 27.

[16]Ibid., 176.

[17]Bontemps, *Black Thunder*, 53.

[18]Thompson, *Four Moments of the Sun*, 27.

[19]Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 11.

[20]Arnold Rampersad, "Introduction to the 1992 Edition," in Arna Bontemps, *Black Thunder*, vii.

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